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EDITED BY

THE RIGHT REV. BERNARD WARD
BISHOP OF BRENTWOOD

AND

THE REV. HERBERT THURSTON, S.J.

THE PRIESTLY VOCATION

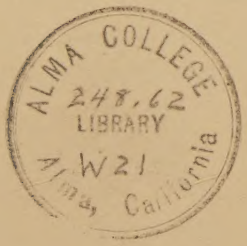
A SERIES OF FOURTEEN CONFERENCES ADDRESSED TO THE SECULAR CLERGY

BY

RIGHT REV. BERNARD WARD

F.R.HIST.S.

BISHOP OF BRENTWOOD



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TO

THE CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD

IN THE MIDST OF WHOM

IT IS MY HAPPY LOT

TO SPEND THE LAST YEARS OF MY LIFE

THE SANCTIFICATION OF WHOM

HAS BECOME THE FIRST OBJECT OF MY

PASTORAL SOLICITUDE

THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE

RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

PREFACE

THE aim of the following pages is to present well-known ideals and principles of action, and to apply them to the state of things actually existing among the secular clergy of this country. They contain the substance of Conferences originally addressed to Seminarists, which are now amended so as to be applicable to a wider circle.

From the nature of the case it happens that the greater number of our spiritual books are written by the Regular Clergy. Yet in some of its phases the religious life differs essentially from that of a secular priest. For example, the virtue of Poverty, or that of Obedience, as practised by the latter differ not in degree but in kind from the manner in which they are practised by those in the religious state. Hence the seculars do not always find the exact application they want.

In the present book it is hoped that frequent

quotations from the writings or sayings of well-known bishops and priests who have had personal experience of the English mission may at least give actuality to what is said, and at the same time add an authority for it to rest on.

Feast of St. Thomas of Canterbury,
Patron of the Secular Clergy of England,
December 29, 1917.

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THE PRIESTLY VOCATION

CONFERENCE I

THE PRIESTLY VOCATION

It is well known that one of the great aims of Cardinal Manning during his long episcopate, and perhaps the one of his works which has left the most permanent impression behind it, was to raise the tone and status of his diocesan clergy. For many reasons connected with our Catholic history, the level at which the average secular priest in the days of the Vicariates aimed left something to be desired. When we read the story of penal times, and realise the kind of life that an ordinary priest had to live, it is not surprising that the tone and quality of mind which we somewhat vaguely designate under the name of the "Ecclesiastical spirit," should not have been largely developed.

We are not speaking now of the time of actual persecution. In the days when a priest had to go about his duties in the continual risk of being apprehended and cast into prison, and being condemned on trial to be hanged, drawn and quartered, the heroism of his life, and the manner in which he had to be almost continuously braving personal danger in his search after souls, would undoubtedly have taken the place of much training and prayer in sanctifying his soul. But with the relaxation of active persecution, came an imminent danger which showed itself throughout the dreary eighteenth century,

and during the first half of the nineteenth. There was no longer any fear of violence, and even the depressing penal laws invented after the Revolution of 1688 gradually lost their vitality and ceased to be enforced. But the spirit engendered by these laws lasted longer than the laws themselves, and when the English clergy found themselves able to live the normal life of a secular priest, some stimulus was required to revive in them the spirit of their state, which had been so long obscured by the necessity of hiding their priesthood.

For consider what the ordinary life of a priest was even in the later days of the Vicariates. He dressed as a layman ; he did not even venture to wear black, but wore the ordinary coloured coats common at that day. If he was not a chaplain to one of the old Catholic families, he would live in his own hired lodging, by himself, and in the utmost poverty. Only rarely would he have the opportunity of meeting a brother priest. Daily mass was at that time not usual. Even the Sunday services were of a very unpretending character, consisting for the most part of low mass, with some English prayers before or after. The " chapels " had little external signs of devotion beyond the altar itself. Statues of our Lady and the Saints were unknown, for it would have been considered highly imprudent to run counter to strong Protestant prejudice in matters which were not essential. The sacraments were administered with as much privacy as possible : the priest would hear Confessions in his own room ; and having no font, would take Baptism water privately to the house of a child who was to be baptised. No vestments would be worn on such occasions, except perhaps a stole over a lay coat. It is not wonderful that such a life produced a kind of religion which was restrained and below the surface, and that there was little inclination to show outward signs of devotion. The lifelong habit of concealing their priesthood from the know-

ledge of others could not but tend to blunt the esteem for it in themselves; and it engendered a form of Catholicity which was dry and undemonstrative, to say the least, and wanting in the warmth of devotion which we now rightly look upon as among the most valuable aids to piety.

Nevertheless, it would be a great mistake to underestimate—as so many of the early Oxford converts did—the sterling qualities of the priesthood of the Vicariates. A more unworldly set of persons, with greater conscientiousness and devotion to duty, has hardly existed in any age of the Church. Their life had a hardiness and simplicity about it which might well be a lesson to a modern priest. Their self-denial and the strictness of their personal lives, added to their remarkable humility and obliteration of self, often indicated great holiness, but it was of a stamp which an outsider would not easily grasp. They themselves in their daily conversations made light of their labours, and it was considered almost bad manners to talk of spiritual subjects. All that was taken as a matter of course, and anyone who spoke of it would be suspected of self-consciousness. The concealment of their devotional life had become to them a second nature, and it is no wonder that the converts who were brought up under such different surroundings failed to appreciate the real substantial virtues of a priest of the old school, or even failed to believe in their existence, while the roughness of their external behaviour was no small trial to those who were brought across it for the first time. Full allowance for this must be made in reading the strictures which Cardinal Manning made on the clergy with whom he was first brought into close contact.

Yet we must admit that this self-effacement had become a hindrance to their work. The time had come when the sacraments could be publicly administered,

when many of the "chapels" had given place to churches which could reasonably be so called, with fonts, confessionals, tabernacles and ambries openly displayed, when a priest could go abroad not indeed in his cassock, but in a distinctively clerical dress, when he could live openly in a priest's house or presbytery, when the churches could be furnished in proper Catholic fashion with side altars, statues of our Lady and the Sacred Heart and the like, and there was no longer any reason to be shy of such practices as burning votive candles before pictures and shrines. Owing to their traditions they did not easily take to such practices, and often even discouraged them as being what they described as "Continental Catholicity," unsuited to the English character. And this spirit was intensified by the action of some of the converts who adopted the extreme opposite course, and carried their slavish imitation of everything Roman to a ridiculous degree. The practical result was that the old Catholics became still more restrained as a protest against the exaggerations of the new-comers, and it cannot be denied that the spirit of shyness of legitimate Catholic devotions thus engendered tended to stunt their development to an unfortunate degree.

It has, moreover, often been said, and still oftener assumed, that the priests of the old school were unfitted or unwilling to undertake new works, such as the building of churches and schools, or other developments requiring initiative and energy. It must be admitted that such was their tradition, for the simple reason that in the greater part of the eighteenth century, no such developments were called for. It was a time of gradual shrinkage of all Catholic work, as mission after mission was shut up. Those who read the account given in Joseph Berington's well-known *State and Behaviour of English Catholics from the Reformation to the year* 1780,

will easily realise how the highest hope of the priest of that day was to keep what remained of Catholicity in the country, and to stem the wearying shrinkage which persistently went on in all Catholic work. It is probable that the English clergy obtained their first lessons of development of such work from their brethren, the *émigrés* priests from France, men such as the Bishop of St. Pol de Léon, or Abbé Carron of Somers Town, or Abbé Maurel of Hampstead, or Abbé Voyaux de Franous of Chelsea, or Abbé Cheverus of Tottenham (afterwards Cardinal Archbishop of Bordeaux), or others who undertook such numerous works, primarily for the benefit of their exiled compatriots, but works which reacted powerfully on the English Catholics themselves. But as soon as the tide was really turned, and the Relief Act of 1791 had begun to bear fruit, we do not find such a marked want of priests ready to initiate new works. Such men as "Father Thomas," afterwards Provost, Doyle, who built St. George's Cathedral, or Rev. William Hunt, the founder of St. Mary's, Moorfields, or Rev. Peter Butler of Bermondsey, were typical priests of the old school, and yet had large ideas which bore fruit in the carrying out of important new works.

It is probable that as time went on, and such work was more and more needed, priests would have been found ready to undertake them; but it may be admitted that such ideas did not occupy a large part of the mind of the average priest of the day.

With respect to the Regular Clergy, many of the above limitations affected the character of their work in similar manner; but they had perhaps better means of combating them. They lived indeed outwardly the same lay life as a secular priest; but at fixed intervals they had to retire abroad to their monasteries and live the regular life for a time; and even when living in England as chaplains to the gentry, or in out-of-the-way

country missions, they were able to keep some part at least of their rule. With the Jesuits this was especially the case, as their rule does not include reciting Office in choir, and is in fact specially adaptable to the conditions of a missionary priest. From the fact that they lived outwardly as the seculars, and were occupied over the same missionary work, while they had the advantage of a longer and more complete training, and continued it on the mission by the observance of their rule, which gave them greater opportunities of becoming spiritual men, they became more highly esteemed by the majority of the laity ; and the feeling grew up that their vocation was the same as that of a secular priest, but that their rule caused them to live up to it better. They were looked upon as on a higher plane ; a feeling which continued long after the circumstances which had led to it had been substantially modified. Even the secular priests themselves seemed to acquiesce in it, and though they were jealous of their own rights in matters ecclesiastical, they were often ready to hand over the more difficult work to the Regulars, and seemed to assume that the latter were the more experienced confessors or spiritual advisers, and that they were leading a higher life than themselves. It was the persistence of this idea which Cardinal Manning felt called upon to combat ; and in order to combat the idea, the most direct method was to destroy the inequality of training which had given rise to it.

We can quote his own words :—[1]

" My first thought was that no Provincial or Father General had any obligation to multiply and perfect his Order greater or more absolute than I had to multiply and to perfect the priesthood of the diocese of Westminster. . . . What was the esteem in which the laity held

[1] *Life of Cardinal Manning*, ii. p. 784.

them ? They, with exceptions, were held to be at a disadvantage as compared with the Regulars : as preachers, confessors, directors, judges of vocation, advisers in spiritual and even in worldly things they were held to be of less esteem. Many of them no doubt were so. But the whole as such was higher in parts. On the other hand, many of the Regulars, with longer training and greater advantages, were better qualified than the priests of the diocese ; but many were not so. And yet the laity took for granted that the clergy were ' seculars,' and spoke of them as such. ' He is only a secular priest ' was often heard, and it revealed a whole world of prejudice, depreciation and mistrust. This was bad enough, but there was worse to come. The priesthood accepted the depreciation which depresses and paralyses the will. A conquered people lose the sense of power, and what is worse, take their state as a standard ; so that priests have come to plead against invitations and exhortations to higher things. ' I am only a secular priest.' What can be greater than a priest ? For itself does it not contain all perfection ? What can black or white or brown cloth add to it ? This seemed to me to be the first thing wanting. The world is governed by ideas, and the idea of our Lord's priesthood, truly and fully conceived, has a motive power to raise men to anything.

" The first thing needed, as it seemed to me, was to bring out into the clearest light what the priesthood is. It seemed to me to be obscured by the traditional prejudice that to be a Regular is to be everything, and to be a priest is to be functionary for sacraments and ceremonies. Even the priesthood of the Regular was lost sight of in his Order, habit and privileges.

" This conviction was the motive of all that I did and wrote at Bayswater. And more explicitly since 1869 in St. Thomas's Seminary and in two books, *The Pastoral Office* and *The Eternal Priesthood.*"

It is no disrespect to the memory of so great a man as Cardinal Manning, to say that like most men who pursue one great idea, he went somewhat to extremes in working for his object. It is well known that he discouraged or at times even prohibited the Regulars from giving missions or retreats, in order to induce his clergy to do so instead. He endeavoured to abolish the very name of a secular priest, as being identified in the minds of many with low ideals and aspirations, and preferred the name "diocesan clergy." He insisted that they had a better right than the Regulars to the title "Father," which from his time began to be applied to them, after the manner in vogue in Ireland; and this change has become so permanent that the old title of "Mr." would to-day sound quite strange. Many of his clergy rose to the occasion, and undertook work which they had before looked upon as outside the scope of their vocation; and they soon achieved great success in it. Let Cardinal Manning himself bear witness to this:—[1]

"The next aim I had," he writes, "was to make the priests of the diocese conscious of their own power as priests. . . . It forced itself upon me that dormant powers diminish, faculties in activity are enlarged, energies exerted continually grow in strength. Why then, I asked, should our priests always ask others to preach for them, to give Missions and Retreats? Is it because they know themselves to be incapable? or because they have come to believe themselves to be incapable, because the laity so regard them? Is it true? If so, *in nomine Domini* let us wipe away this reproach as speedily as ever we can. Is it that our priests are discouraged and believe themselves to be what is said of them? At all events the way to cure this incapacity is to do the things of which they are told that they are

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 785.

incapable. Let them preach, give Missions and Retreats, 'Use legs, have legs.'

"I have therefore encouraged them to give parochial missions, which have greatly prospered; chiefly to the priests themselves. Many have told me that they had no knowledge they possessed such power over their people; that in giving the missions a new light and strength came to them, and a new piety came to their people. They had never before made a full trial of the priesthood, and of the powers dormant in it."

There can be no doubt that the work of Cardinal Manning was successful, in that he raised the tone and work of the secular clergy in a marked degree. And his work had a certain reflection outside his diocese, especially in the north, where the traditions of Dr. Newsham at Ushaw were still fresh. It is true that neither there nor after Cardinal Manning's time in London, has the full exclusiveness which he introduced been maintained. Missions and Retreats are fitly given by religious not only because they have more leisure to give to a proper preparation, but also because the holiness of their lives will often react upon the success of their work. The very fact of their being outside the ordinary parochial life is often an advantage for a mission. People confess to them more readily. But the idea that a secular priest is by his state unfit for such work may be said to be dead, and from time to time, as occasion offers, we find them bearing their share of it. The expression "only a secular priest" has passed from out our vocabulary, and the old-fashioned depreciation of the secular clergy is almost a thing of the past.

CONFERENCE II

THE PRIESTLY VOCATION—*continued*

It was pointed out in the last Conference that the root of the evil of the depreciation of the secular clergy in the past, was the idea, in which they seemed to acquiesce, that their vocation was similar to that of the Regulars; but that not being religious, they were on a lower plane and could live with less high ideals and aspirations. The true fact, however, is that the two vocations are radically and essentially different. Each has its own special sphere of work in the Church, and if properly lived up to, they will not clash, but will supplement each other.

Consider this one point. The secular clergy are trained and ordained for the one special object of parochial or pastoral work; whereas in the case of the regulars, such work is only incidental and secondary. Many—in some countries the majority—never do it at all; and in the case of those who do, it is limited both in quality and amount by the demands of the rule and traditions of their particular Order or Congregation.

It is true indeed that in this country in the penal days and after, a large amount of missionary work was done by the regulars under conditions not very dissimilar to those under which the seculars were working. The English Benedictines became practically a missionary congregation, and remained such until almost within living memory: but this was due to the stress of the times. At an ordinary Benedictine monastery the

monks give themselves to a life of prayer and study, and to singing the Divine Office in choir, only a few of them doing any parochial or missionary work, and that always in subservience to their monastic life.

Let it be admitted if so desired that, in itself, this vocation is higher than that of the secular clergy ; for it makes the sanctification of him who receives it the first and chief concern, to which any work which he may undertake must be subordinate. In that way it becomes the highest possible state of life, for it fulfils our Lord's test,[1] " If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have a treasure in heaven, and come, follow Me." The traditional interpretation given by the Church to the well-known text, " Mary hath chosen the best part,"[2] indicates the greater dignity of the contemplative over the active life.

Many religious orders, however, especially the modern congregations, were not founded for the contemplative life in this strict sense, but rather for carrying out some active work of a specific nature, which could be combined with the religious life. The Society of Jesus was founded for special educational and other work ; the Redemptorists were intended for giving missions to the uninstructed poor of the country districts ; and similarly with others. Such Congregations will adapt themselves, so far as they can, to altered conditions, and will often undertake work such as was not exactly contemplated by their founders ; but they will always regulate the amount which they undertake by the consideration of the limitations of their rule and the number of their subjects available, their general principle being that no member must be given work which either in degree or in kind would interfere with his own religious life, for that is the primary object of his vocation. For every

[1] St. Matt. xix. 21. [2] St. Luke x. 42.

one of them is bound to aim at perfection, which is of the essence of his state.

This consideration is so important as to be an excuse for quoting at some length a portion of a well-known letter of Cardinal Wiseman in which he urges it. When he first came to London as Bishop in 1847, and saw the amount of work among the poor that was calling out to be done, and the utter inadequacy of the secular clergy in point of numbers to cope with it, he conceived the idea of putting much of it as special work into the hands of the religious Congregations, who were then settling in London: but he found in every case that their missionary activities were strictly limited both as to quantity and quality. We can quote his own words:—[1]

"1. The Jesuits have a splendid church, a large house, several priests, besides Westminster.[2] Scarcely was I settled in London, than I applied to their Superior to establish here a *community* in due form, of some ten or twelve fathers. I also asked for missionaries to give retreats to congregations, etc. I was answered on both heads, that dearth of subjects made it impossible. Hence we have under them, only a church which, by its splendour, attracts and absorbs the wealth of two parishes, but maintains no schools and contributes nothing towards the education of the poor at its very door. . . .

"2. The Redemptorists came to London as a missionary Order, and I cheerfully approved of and encouraged their coming. When they were settled down, I spoke to them of my cherished plan of missions to and among the poor. I was told that this was not the purpose

[1] *Life of Wiseman*, ii. p. 116.

[2] i.e. The old Jesuit mission in Romney Terrace, afterwards Horseferry Road, now absorbed in the Cathedral parish. The letter was written on October 27, 1852.

of their institute *in towns*, and that 'another Order would be required for what I wanted.' The plea of 'rule' is one which I have all along determined to respect; and I had no more to say. They have become, so far as London is concerned, a parochial body, taking excellent care of Clapham, having five or six priests and abundant means for it. . . .

"3. The Passionists I brought first to England, in consequence of having read what their founder felt for it, and of a promise I made to Father Dominic years before I got them placed at Aston Hall, and thence they have spread. In consequence it was decreed that the principal house should be in London when I came to it. . . . They have never done me a stroke of work among the poor. . . .

"4. The Marists I brought over for a local purpose, and they are answering well. I hope for much good from them in Spitalfields, but, at least at present, I dare not ask them about general work.

"5. And now, last, I come to the institute of which I almost considered myself a member, San Filippo's Oratory. I have never omitted an opportunity of expressing my thankfulness to God for its establishment here, and for the many graces it has brought with it, in the piety it has diffused, and the many it has converted. But as a matter of fact, you know that external work, the work I have been sighing for, is beyond its scope.

"You know" (he continues) "how rigidly I have respected 'rule,' how I never thought of forcing a parish on you, how I have refrained from asking co-operation, even a sermon, because I would ask for nothing which I understood to be incompatible with the Institute's purpose. . . . Two things I have always respected in the case of all Orders, *vocation* and *rule*."

And he sums up as follows :—

" Look at the position in which I am . . . I have introduced, or greatly encouraged, the establishment of *five* religious congregations in my diocese ; and I am just (for the great work) where I first began ! Not one of them *can* (for it cannot be want of will) undertake it. It comes within the purpose of none of them to try. Souls are perishing around them, but they are prevented by the rules, given by Saints, from helping to save them—at least in anything but a particular and definite way."

In the case of secular priests, no such reasons for limiting their work can ever enter in. It is sufficient that the work is there, waiting to be done, and they must put their hands to it, even though their number be hopelessly inadequate to perform it with anything like completeness or efficiency. They are, as it were, the residuary legatees of the needs of the Church, and often have to do the roughest work for the simple reason that no one else has undertaken it. Many a priest is in charge of a mission, either alone or in company with others, in which the amount to be done is hopelessly out of proportion to the supply of men to do it. Yet he cannot refuse. He must do what he can, as well as he can, and leave the rest in the hands of Divine Providence. This is surely nothing to be ashamed of : it is rather the chief glory of the secular clergy that the roughest work of the Church falls to our lot, and we are continually called upon to do that which the religious, for good and lawful reasons, cannot undertake. One sometimes hears of dissatisfaction at their having missions which are flourishing so far as this world's resources are concerned. It may be that it is their hard work and self-denial which has caused their missions to become so ; but whether this is the full explanation or not, there is no reason why we should envy them : rather they should

envy us, in the difficult and uphill work which has been laid upon us by the providence of God.

Nor can we refuse to do it on the plea that our spiritual life will suffer. Such will indeed seem at first sight to be the case. Consider the example of a busy mission in London or one of our large towns, especially if it be a single-handed one. On an ordinary Sunday there a priest cannot possibly devote much time to his own religious exercises. He will perhaps have to say two masses, to preach possibly more than once, to catechise children, and give Benediction, and to administer the sacraments of Confession, Holy Communion, and Baptism at different times of the day. Manifestly his own meditation, spiritual reading and the like have to be omitted. Even his Office is said with difficulty, a great part of it perhaps at the end of a long day's work when he is hardly physically fit to say it, and might with advantage profit by our English privilege of substituting the Rosary. Often on the Monday he will not have sufficiently recovered and has as far as possible to take a day's rest. Thus his regular spiritual exercises are at best limited to five days in the week, on the last of which—the Saturday—the pressure of the coming Sunday work is already making itself felt, with the duties of preparing sermons, and perhaps sitting long hours in the Confessional. This weekly break is an effective hindrance to any strict adherence to a rule of life, and prevents the personal self-sanctification of a secular priest from being so systematic as that of a religious. Indeed, even on an average week-day, it is impossible to adhere at all rigidly to any self-made rule. If a priest has to go out to say mass at a Convent, it is hard to avoid his daily meditation being performed in a perfunctory fashion, or sometimes even omitted altogether. If he has to say mass twice or three times a week at ten o'clock and on other mornings at eight—as is

often the case in town missions—regularity of life disappears. Then much of his pastoral work—such as visitations, sick calls, or unexpected calls to the Confessional—is entirely uncertain and variable as to time, and cannot be foreseen. Moreover, the anxieties of a priest are very distracting to the even tenor of our spiritual life. Add to this that much of his recreation has to be taken late in the evening, as being the only time that his friends in the parish are at home, and it is difficult to refuse *all* invitations to dine out, or his position among his parishioners would suffer: yet the evening is the time of day when naturally a spiritual man wishes to be recollected.

What then? Are the secular clergy to surrender their own sanctification for the sake of their work? The question has only to be asked to be answered in the negative. The dignity of the priesthood and the pastoral office is enough to put such an idea out of our thoughts. Some of the greatest saints of the Church—including the Apostles themselves—belonged to the secular clergy: and it would be manifest blasphemy to look on their state as anything but a school of holiness. Certainly we must look for an answer in a different direction from this.

Three different answers may be suggested, each of which can lead us to important considerations.

In the first place we have the three great Evangelical Virtues, Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, as practised by the priest, which inform their whole lives and give a character and greatness which overshadows everything that they do. These are so important that separate Conferences will be given to the consideration of each. Let it suffice here, then, to enumerate them as the first answer to the difficulty we are considering, of how the secular priesthood is to be made a school of holiness.

The second answer is the spirit which prompts us to do our work. It is a spirit of complete self-sacrifice and

trust in God, who will in his own way watch over His priests and ministers, so that if they have sacrificed themselves for the sake of preaching the Gospel of His kingdom, He will in return take them under his protection and accomplish their sanctification in His own manner and in His own time.

Let us take comfort when we examine our lives. We may find that our daily exercises have been very irregular ; that our meditation has been cut short, or elbowed out ; our spiritual reading has often been postponed till late at night, or performed in perfunctory or distracted manner, or not infrequently omitted ; our Office has been said at odd times whenever we could fit it in ; perhaps we have not always been regular even at our daily mass. The cause of much of this has no doubt been culpable ; we might have been less irregular than we have been. But if we can truly say that it was in great measure due to the unequal pressure of our work, and that the primary cause is traceable to the necessary sacrifice of our ministry we can feel confidence in the result ; for whatever our shortcomings in detail, we have in the main been practising the highest kind of self-sacrifice, and the kind which is specially characteristic of our vocation as secular priests. This is the advice insisted on in the *Imitation of Christ :* [1] " Evil ought not to be done either for anything in the world, or for the love of any man ; but for the profit of one that stands in need, a good work is sometimes freely to be omitted, or rather to be changed for a better. For by doing thus, a good work is not lost, but is changed into a better. Without charity the outward work profiteth nothing ; but whatever is done out of charity, be it never so little and contemptible, all becomes fruitful. For God regards more with how much affection and love a person performs a work than how much he does."

[1] Book I, xix. 3.

But if we have often to set aside our rule of life, and postpone or give up our religious exercises at the call of charity, we should be careful to maintain strictness in not giving them up for other reasons, as, for example, for the sake of some recreation, or through pure laziness. Here also we may quote the *Imitation :* [1] " If for piety's sake, or with a design to the profit of our neighbour we sometimes omit our accustomed exercises, it may afterwards be easily recovered. But if through a loathing of mind or negligence it be lightly let alone, it is no small fault and will prove harmful." So long as we act strictly on this principle, we shall find that hard work, however distracting, is not a bar to holiness. " Let no one think," says Cardinal Manning,[2] " that a busy life cannot be a holy life. The busiest life may be full of piety. Holiness consists not in doing uncommon things, but in doing all common things with an uncommon fervour. No life was ever more full of work and of its interruptions than the life of our Lord and His Apostles. They were surrounded by the multitude, and ' there were many coming and going, and they had not so much as time to eat ' (St. Mark vi. 31). Nevertheless, a busy life " (he adds) " needs a punctual and sustained habit of prayer. It is neither piety nor charity for a priest to shorten his preparation before mass or his thanksgiving after it because people are waiting for him. He must first wait upon God, and then he may serve his neighbour."

A third answer to our question on the means of our sanctification may be given, of a different kind from the other two. It is that the very works of our ministry may be a direct source of sanctification far greater than the various exercises, which from time to time we give up. Some of these we may enumerate.

First and foremost comes our daily mass. This can

[1] *Ibid.*, xv. 1. [2] *Eternal Priesthood*, p. 81.

never be omitted through pressure of external work, whether there is a congregation or not. Time was, when in the days of our youth, we looked forward to the privilege of saying mass as almost too great and too sacred to be spoken of. It seemed to us that with this daily privilege, all life would be sanctified and sin would become impossible to us. What has been our experience after many years of this daily privilege? Has it fulfilled our expectation? Alas, our first experience has been that with frequent repetition the act has become perfunctory, and has often been performed with inadequate preparation, too short a thanksgiving, and little real devotion. Perhaps we have been free in too often omitting it. But it is not too much to assert that when it has been said properly, with suitable preparation and recollection, it has more than realised our most sanguine expectations, and that no instrument of sanctification could exceed in strength the daily mass of the priest, well prepared, well celebrated, and with a suitable thanksgiving.

After this we may look at the various exercises of the pastoral ministry. Take the Confessional; who can rise up from a long session in the box without the consciousness that he is a better man? Why is it that the time spent in the exercise of hearing the Confessions of others never seems long, except that during the whole time we are conscious that it is reacting upon ourselves? Cardinal Manning enumerates five different truths upon which the Confessor assimilates:—[1]

"First, self-knowledge, by bringing things to his own remembrance and by showing him his own face in a glass by the lives of sinners.

"Secondly, contrition, in the sorrow of penitents who will not be consoled.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 104.

" Thirdly, delicacy of conscience in the innocent whose eye being single and their body full of light, accuse themselves of omissions and deviations from the will of God which we, perhaps, daily commit without discernment.

" Fourthly, aspiration by the fervent, whose one desire and effort, in the midst of burdened and restless homes, is to rise higher and higher in union with God.

" Fifthly, self-accusation at our own unprofitableness, from the generosity and fidelity of those who are hindered on every side, and yet in humility, self-denial, charity and union with God surpass us, who have every gift of time and grace needed for perfection."

A similar effect is produced in us by the ordinary visitation of our people, even in the most difficult surroundings. How many do we not come across whose daily uphill struggle for virtue puts our own lives to shame! Others whose trust in God in apparently hopeless circumstances, and the answers which we see to their prayers, bring the closeness of God's providence over His elect sensibly nearer to us. Then our prayer with our people and for our people, our instructions and sermons, our indirect influence over them, all alike continually keep us in the presence of God. There is a tendency among some priests to look upon the devotions in which they lead their people as one thing, and their own spiritual exercises—their Office, Meditation, Spiritual Reading—as another. There is no need for any such distinction. The devotions which a priest goes through with his people—the Rosary, confraternity prayers, Benediction and the like—react on his spiritual life quite as strongly as his Meditation or Spiritual Reading which he may have omitted in their favour. The Curé of Ars for many years practically gave up his private spiritual exercises, except his mass, in order to devote the whole of his time to his pastoral work, either in the

Confessional, or in the midst of his people, preaching to them, or saying night prayers or other devotions with them. In his later years he was dispensed by Rome even from saying his Office. His was indeed an extreme case ; but the same principles hold good, in their measure, in the case of every priest who devotes himself to his pastoral work. Even the sin and misery which we see around us, bring vividly before us the dignity of our own office in trying to rescue our people from the results of their own folly. Still more when we minister at the death either of one who has led a good Christian life, or one who has become a true penitent, are we brought almost into touch with the other world. There is a sacredness about a Catholic death-bed which is all its own. One moment the patient is going through the last of his sufferings in this world, dependent upon our poor help and our prayers, and receiving the consolations of religion at our hands : a moment later he is in the other world, looking down on us, with knowledge and experience which we so long to have, his salvation we hope assured, and this the result of our ministry. Can any priest come back from a Catholic death-bed without a feeling of awe, and his faith strengthened as though he were in actual contact with the next world ?

To sum up then, the pastoral work of the priest is in itself a means of sanctification as direct and as efficacious as any personal religious exercises can be ; and while we should always be jealous of omitting any of our accustomed devotions through carelessness or laziness, we need have no misgiving when they are omitted in consequence of the pressure of our pastoral work. We may fitly conclude with one more quotation from Cardinal Manning on the sanctifying power of the self-sacrifice which a true pastor practises :—[1]

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

"The pastoral office is in itself a discipline of perfection. For first of all it is a life of abnegation of self. A pastor has so many obediences to fulfil, as he has souls to serve. The good and the evil, the sick and the whole, the young and the old, the wise and the foolish, the worldly and the unworldly—who are not always wise—the penitent and the impenitent, the converted and the unconverted, the lapsed and the relapsed, the obdurate and the defiant, all must be watched over—none may be neglected, still less cast off—always, at all times and in all ways possible. St. Philip used to say that a priest should have no time of his own, and that many of his most consoling conversations came to him out of hours at unseasonable moments. If he had sent them away because they came out of time, or at supper-time and the like, they might have been lost. Then again, the trials of temper, patience, self-control in bearing with the strange and inconsiderate minds that come to him, and the demands made upon his strength and endurance day and night in the calls of the sick and dying, coming often one after another when for a moment he has gone to rest; the weary and continual importunities of people and of letters, till the sound of the bell or the knock at the door is a constant foreboding, too surely fulfilled; all these things make a pastor's life as wearisome, and, strange to say, as isolated as if he were in the desert. No sackcloth so mortifies the body as this life of perpetual self-abnegation mortifies the will. But when the will is mortified, the servant is like his Master, and his Master is the exemplar of all perfection."

CONFERENCE III

POVERTY

THERE is nothing new in the remark that Christ at His coming sanctified the state of poverty in a manner totally new to the world. In this relation we look upon the circumstances which surrounded His birth as a very special Providence. The life of the Holy Family at Nazareth was indeed one of ordinary but apparently not extreme poverty. The question "Is not this the son of the carpenter whom we know?" "Is not this the carpenter?" show us that our Lord and St. Joseph practised a trade in the ordinary way, like any other Jews would have done, working no doubt day by day for their living, but not in a state of destitution, or in want for the necessaries of life. By a combination of circumstances however, which we believe to have been brought about by God for this express purpose, His birth took place away from His home and from the friends of His mother and St. Joseph, in surroundings which were without what may fairly be considered as the necessaries of life. It was under these circumstances that He preached His first sermon on the dignity of Poverty.

It was a new idea to the people and one of which the world had never before heard. The poor have ever formed the vast majority of mankind; yet the instinct has always been to look down upon them. The ancient Romans looked upon the needy and the afflicted as the object of the malediction of the gods. A story is

told of one of the Emperors sending a whole shipload of them to sea, and having the vessel sunk, so as to rid the city of their presence. The Jews had indeed learnt something less opposed to the truth; but even they looked upon Poverty as a misfortune. A promise of an earthly reward was necessary as a stimulus to lead them on to do their duty. "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long lived upon the land which the Lord thy God will give thee." A modest competency was to them the minimum that was put before them to deliver them from care and anxiety. "Give me neither beggary nor riches: give me only the necessaries of life."[1] Yet they knew that if the poor were faithful to God, He would protect them; and indeed that one of the attributes of the God of the Jews was His providential care of the poor. "He shall judge the poor of the people, and he shall save the children of the poor, and he shall humble the oppressors. . . . He shall deliver the poor from the mighty, and the needy that had no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy; and he shall save the souls of the poor."[2]

Our Lord in His teaching, however, went far beyond anything which even the Jews had before their minds, when He proclaimed that Poverty was the true state of blessedness. His first recorded words as official teacher of mankind are "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." In another passage we read still more explicitly,[3] "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God; Blessed are ye that hunger now, for you shall be filled; Blessed are ye that weep now, for you shall laugh: . . . but woe to you that are rich, for you have your consolation. Woe

[1] Prov. xxx. 8. [2] Ps. lxxxi. 4, 12. [3] St. Luke vi. 20.

to you that are filled, for you shall hunger; woe to you that now laugh, for you shall mourn and weep." He is here putting the state of poverty forward as the state of blessing, more to be desired than the state of riches.

The same idea we find enforced by our Lord in His teaching in numerous instances. Riches He speaks of as "the Mammon of Iniquity," so intimately connected does He consider them with vice. More than that. He speaks as though the salvation of a rich man was so difficult as to be almost a test of God's omnipotence. "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God. . . . With man it is impossible; but with God all things are possible."[1]

Consider also some of our Lord's parables in this regard. The well-known one of Dives and Lazarus at once occurs to mind. The rich man is not accused of any particular evil; but simply he lived trusting in his riches, the selfish life of which they are so often the foundation. He "was clothed in purple and fine linen and feasted sumptuously every day"; while Lazarus "lay at his gate full of sores, desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table"; and it is added almost as a matter of course that after death their lots are reversed. Abraham is depicted as saying to the rich man, "Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou are tormented."[2] In another parable we have placed before us one who trusted so much in his accumulated wealth that he said to himself, "Thou hast much good laid up for many years, take thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer"; and the merited rejoinder is "Thou fool; this night

[1] St. Matt. xix. 24, 26. [2] St. Luke xvi. 19, 25.

do they require thy soul of thee, and where shall those things be which thou hast provided?"[1] These examples might be multiplied indefinitely.

There is no danger of the virtue of poverty being lost sight of by the Church. The whole attitude of the clergy and devout laity affords opportunities of charity to the poor. Not only do they practise almsgiving to a degree far beyond any question of strict duty, but many of them give themselves to personal work among the poor, which is more valuable than silver and gold, while the modern active congregations of nuns are fully appreciated especially for the work that they do among the poor. One of the most sanctifying phases of a priest's life is his close contact with the poor. The man of the world at best looks upon them as persons to be pitied, to be relieved, to be helped; in modern times, they teach them to combine together to insist on the betterment of their state—a movement with which, if carried on with proper responsibility and care, the Church is in full sympathy. But so long as the world goes on, so long there will be poor people in it, and to the Christian, still more to the priest, the natural attitude is something bordering on reverence for the poor; for to them Christian virtues such as humility, work, self-denial, obedience, come almost naturally as the accompaniment of their state. Their very necessities almost compel them to seek comfort from God in prayer. Many of the poor indeed neglect these advantages and make their poverty a source of discontent and even murmuring against Divine Providence in this regard. Equally a rich man may practise poverty of spirit; but it does not come easily. "How *hardly* shall they who have riches enter into the kingdom of God."[2]

While however a priest easily understands the sanctifying effects of poverty in others, there is a real danger

[1] St. Luke xii. 20. [2] St. Mark x. 23.

that he may fail to appreciate it in himself. The anxious and worrying effect on the mind, the continuous trouble as much as the self-denial necessitated by the conditions of his life seem to interfere with his power of prayer and with the proper sanctification of his duties. Yet in truth the facing of such conditions may react in a far more sanctifying way than the prayers and devotions which they impede : the prayer of a poor man in anxiety and distress, even though a distracted prayer, may be more efficacious than the ordinary prayer of the man in comfortable circumstances.

Thank God, in England there is no chance of a priest being anything else than a poor man. But there are degrees of poverty amongst us according to the missions at which we are stationed and other circumstances ; and from the fact of the general state being inevitable, we are apt to lose sight of its value and long for positions where we have to practise it less rather than more.

It is well for us then to think over and apply to ourselves the fact that Poverty as such should be looked upon as a true blessing, to be desired as the ordinary means by which our lives may be raised up and made like to that of our Divine Master. True, indeed, our wish should be for whatever surroundings will best enable us to carry out the work which God has destined for us individually ; and whatever He sends us, we joyfully accept. But so far as we have any wish or longing, the blessing we should prefer should not be riches, but poverty, for that make us more like to Him.

It is just here, when we come to reduce theory to practice, that our state contrasts with that of a religious. In one sense—and a true sense—they practise the virtue in its fulness, and we should never underestimate the spirit of self-sacrifice necessary in order to have nothing that they can call their own. But in another sense, religious poverty may be easier to practise than that with which

a secular priest is faced. For their wants are always provided for, and they are free from the anxieties of poverty with which we are familiar. St. Ignatius gives it as one of the fruits of whole-hearted sacrifice in the Society, that it relieves its members of all care. They live indeed in what may be called in the words of Pope Leo XIII " frugal comfort," such as befits men who are poor ; but they are free from anxiety. For St. Alphonsus it was not enough that his subjects should use things that are cheap ; but he wished that they should be rough and common things, so that the spirit of poverty might not be wanting. And many inconveniences distinctive of poverty are common to all religious. But so long as their order or congregation exists and flourishes they need have no care or anxiety for themselves or their future.

Our poverty, however, is of a totally different type, and our dangers of a different nature. The life of a secular priest may be full of care and anxiety on the question of money—difficulty of making ends meet, support of church and school, perhaps the weight of a capital debt, good works languishing for want of means —the poor dependent on him—and so forth. He will wear a threadbare coat, and deny himself any food or comfort that are not absolutely necessary for the sake of his people and his work. This is a poverty more wearing and apparently less sanctifying. Poor jaded human nature longs to be free from care and anxiety, and we easily lose sight of the supernatural power of poverty. We look on it as the unfortunate accompaniment of the existing state of Catholic England ; we fail to remember that it is one of the great sources of blessing on it. Hence the anxiety of some priests to be placed on better missions, with more pay and less work, a hope for better days in recognition of past services and so forth.

What is to be our remedy ? How are we to learn to

love our poverty, to realise its power for good, to make it, as it can be made, the greatest source of our sanctification ?

The answer to all these questions is one and the same. Our life must have about it the notes and characteristics of the poor men that we are. It must be a life of humility and self-effacement, hardiness, and of work ; there must be no self-indulgence ; and, above all, we must surrender our liberty to the call of duty. Let us consider these points in detail.

1. A poor man does not think of himself individually ; he knows that he is only one of a multitude of human beings similarly circumstanced. He has to work for his living, and is willing to put up with whatever his lot may be, provided he can earn what is necessary for the support of himself and those who depend on him. He does not resent being slighted : he looks upon it as his natural lot. Nor does he put forward his own wishes or opinions. He only desires to be able to go his way and do his daily work. Our Lord was in this, as in other things, our model. He had lived nearly thirty years at Nazareth, and all that his fellow townspeople had to say of Him was, " Is not this the carpenter ? "—as though to say, " Is he not like any other carpenter ? "—" How came this man by all these things ? " (St. Mark vi. 2, 3.) In like manner a priest with the spirit of poverty will seek no notoriety, will not wish to be known from his fellow clergy, but will only seek to be allowed to live the daily life on the mission, and to share its blessings. He will look on the ordinary rough usage of life merely as incidents to be expected, while he pursues the end of his calling, the acquisition not of temporal, but of spiritual riches : the " unum necessarium," so far as he is concerned.

2. A poor man does not seek after self-indulgence. If money is spent on himself, he has to do additional

work to earn it : this thought is a perpetual stimulus to self-denial. In similar manner, to a priest on the mission there is plenty of such stimulus. Such small sums of money as may pass through his hands are wanted over and over again for the relief of the poor around him. Their needs are ever present, and appeal loudly and forcibly to him. If he is a rector, the expenses of the mission have to be met, and they are often increased by having to find interest on mortgages or capital debt, sometimes leaving little or nothing for personal expenses or salary. Here necessity to some extent asserts itself ; but not altogether. A priest in a so-called comfortable mission has the physical power to make himself very comfortable. He can furnish his rooms well, so that they appeal both to his artistic sense and to his self-indulgence : he can spend money enough to give himself the best of food, without sinning against justice or defrauding anybody ; he can save money enough for a first-rate holiday once a year. His work may languish, though he does all he is bound to do, and no one can make a complaint against him.

Yet he is living a life unworthy of his state, and one which will not bring any blessing on him such as the sanctification of his flock. Where is his spirit of poverty ? Has a poor man always plenty of good food ? Does not his work sometimes suffer from his forced abstemiousness ? Can he give himself a holiday of the nature indicated ? Truly many a man of the world would envy the comfortable life of a priest who has lost the spirit of poverty. A zealous priest on the other hand will strive to live economically. His measure of food is just that which will support him and enable him to do his work efficiently : his measure of comfort[1] will be that which

[1] The question of how to furnish one's rooms must be always a personal one for each priest to settle. To some, the advantage of an attractive room, artistically decorated, both as to furniture

he needs for his work. If he be in a well-to-do mission, he will willingly save what he can for the relief of the poor at his doors. If he is on a poorer mission, or if he is a junior priest, he will willingly accept any necessary self-denial, both as a schooling for himself and because he knows that what is saved will find a worthy destination in the hands of the poor and needy, or in the support of the Church.

3. A poor man is a hard-working man. "Exibit homo ad opus suum, et ad operationem suum usque ad vesperam." "Man shall go forth to his work, and to his labour until evening."[1] Such is the ordinary lot of mortals. By far the majority have to work for their daily bread. They only think themselves fortunate to have work ready to their hands which will enable them to earn what they require. Now a priest may be a hard-working man or not as he himself decides. The amount of work absolutely necessary and binding *ex justitia* is usually not large. His Sunday duty may be heavy; but during the greater part of the week he is free. But if he has the spirit of his state, the work ready to his hand is inexhaustible; and the salvation of numberless souls depends upon his doing it. "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" is Christ's reproach to those who have time on their hands and do not use it. St. Alphonsus made a

and pictures, may be a help towards their work, and induce them to spend time among their books which might otherwise be frittered away. But the effeminate or even luxurious method of furnishing that one has occasionally seen is hard to defend in a priest's room. Cardinal Vaughan ends his book on *The Young Priest* by this advice:—

"We have but one caution to offer, and that is, not to furnish your room as though it were a lady's boudoir. Indulgence in this kind of taste tells unfavourably upon a Priest's own character and stamps the man in the judgment of others" (*The Young Priest*, p. 34).

[1] Ps. ciii. 23.

vow that he would never pass a minute of time unoccupied. Such a vow if kept to would mean a heroic life. Far short of that we can well learn to use our time with the sense of responsibility. To throw away time in inordinate reading of the newspapers, accompanied with the smoking of cigarettes, may not be definitely sinful ; but it is throwing away opportunities which will never recur. A hard-working business man once explained to the writer that he never wasted a moment of time : so much so that if he had to wait in a waiting-room before seeing some one, he would exercise himself by valuing in his mind all the objects of furniture, which he considered a good business training of the faculties. Truly the children of this world are in their way wiser than the children of light. He said Time is money : we can say, Time is eternal life. Which of the two maxims makes time more valuable, or should make us harder workers ?

4. Uncertainty as to the future. We often hear a demand among the clergy for " fixity of tenure." This means that a Rector, without Canonical fault, should not be removable from his mission, which should be bound to give him support in sickness and old age. There is nothing unreasonable in this aspiration, at least for those who have a certain number of years of work behind them : the ordinary law of the Church is designed to produce such security. Nevertheless, we in England, when we were truly missioners, and had no such claim to fall back upon, were undoubtedly practising the virtue of poverty in a higher degree than those who had complete and permanent parochial livings. A poor man's future is always precarious, depending on his services being still wanted, his employers being themselves prosperous, his own health remaining strong, and a thousand other contingencies of life. A missioner in accepting a like state of precariousness is putting himself

on a higher plane than that of the ordinary parochial clergy, and many priests, with the true spirit of their vocation, have rejoiced in their condition in this respect, the hardship of which has been much mitigated by the existence of clergy funds which secure to the aged and infirm an amount of help quite out of proportion with the entrance fees or subscriptions they have to pay, and thus far better than any mutual help association of the working man.

In recent years, however, this question has been settled permanently. Whatever the effect here in England of the legislation of Pius X—about which there has been some difference of opinion—in the revised Canon Law it is laid down that in all countries in which there is a Hierarchy, the rectors of the churches are to be "Parochi"; but whether or not they have security of tenure is left to the Bishop to decide in each case. It is possible that our custom in England may continue without much change, and only those who have what were formerly known as Missionary Rectories will have true security of tenure: that, however, will depend on the individual Bishop. But at least, we can say that those who are called to work long years without such security, will be called to practise the virtue of poverty in a higher degree than the others. A priest with the true missionary vocation will do good while he can, and leave the future in the hands of God. The practice of a priest saving up money for his old age is not indeed to be condemned, but it is the less high course. How many have done this for years and then the last summons came to them while still in middle life, so that they had to leave their savings for others to spend.

5. Surrender of Liberty. The consideration of this can be postponed until the Conference on Obedience.

CONFERENCE IV

CHASTITY

We are often asked by non-Catholics why it is that priests are not allowed to marry. It is a difficult question to answer in a few words, and becomes the more difficult from the obvious inability of even a well-disposed person who is not a Catholic to understand our view of the matter. We should probably answer by appealing to the conveniences of the rule. A man who is unmarried is free from encumbrances; he can go where he is sent at short notice; in his daily life all the time and thought which he would otherwise spend on the affairs of his home and the bringing up of his children can be devoted to the direct work of his ministry. We might perhaps quote the words of St. Paul: "He that is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God; but he that is with a wife is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife; and he is divided."[1] Or we might point to financial considerations to show that it is a useful rule, for an unmarried priest can be supported on a far lower income than a married one. A somewhat similar rule applies to the army, and for similar reasons, with this important limitation, that soldiers cannot be expected to deprive themselves permanently of matrimony, so that the limit of the rule is to restrict it to a certain percentage, and to those of a certain age; whereas priests

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 32, 33.

being called to a more self-denying life, are expected to do without it permanently.

All this is true as far as it goes; but we ourselves know that this is only one aspect of the subject, and that not the most important one. The fact that the Church faces scandals among the clergy in every age of her history, without showing any inclination to relax the rule, would surely point to the fact that there are greater issues involved than mere questions of finance or convenience. These scandals are indeed happily few—very few—in proportion to the total number of the clergy; but they are sufficiently numerous and sufficiently grave to make us certain that the Church would not insist on the rule which makes their recurrence possible, but for a good of surpassing and all-pervading importance.

In fact the Church has ever spoken with no uncertain voice on the excellence of the celibate over the married state. Not that she underrates the latter; on the contrary, by raising matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament and insisting on its indissolubility, she has done much to raise the standard of domestic virtue and domestic happiness, and to emphasise the greatness of the Christian home and family. But St. Paul says, "He that giveth his virgin in marriage does well"; but "he that giveth her not does better"; [1] and the celibate state has ever been regarded by the Church as higher than that of matrimony.

In fact it would seem that the married state, great as it is, is hardly compatible with the highest sanctity: scarcely an instance occurs to mind of a canonised saint who died in the married state, except martyrs whose sanctification was accomplished by the very act of death.

Nor is there any difficulty in discerning our Lord's special love for celibacy or virginity. An esteem for virginity was indeed the creation of Christianity. Even

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 38.

to the Jews, for a woman to have no children was considered a reproach,[1] if for no other reason, because it destroyed any possibility of the Messiah being descended from her. It was our Blessed Lady herself who first broke through this prejudice. For her answer to the Archangel Gabriel can only mean that she esteemed the privilege of being ever a virgin more than the prospect of having the Messiah descended from her, or even that He should be her own son. It was only when it was explained to her that by a special dispensation of Providence her mothership was to be compatible with her continued virginity that she gave the requisite consent, and the Word was made Flesh within her womb. It is perhaps a thought that we might make more prominent in our spiritual life that Mary, whom we love to regard as the guardian of a priest's celibacy, was in truth the first in this world to discover the excellence of that state, and the first to practise it as a virtue.

And there are other instances where our Lord showed His special predilection for this virtue. The "disciple whom Jesus loved," whose head was on His breast at the Last Supper, who stood beneath the Cross, and received the commission to be the guardian of our Lady during the remainder of her sojourn on this earth, according to tradition practised this virtue throughout his life in all its fulness, so that the Church on his feast day calls out, "Valde honorandus est beatus Joannes, quis upra pectus Domini in coena recubuit; cui Christus in cruce matrem virginem virgini commendavit"; and again, "Diligebat eum Jesus quoniam specialis praerogativa castitatis ampliori dilectione fecerat dignum: quia virgo electus ab ipso, virgo in aevum permansit. In cruce denique moriturus huic matrem suam virginem Virgini commendavit, quia virgo electus ab ipso, virgo in aevum permansit."

[1] St. Luke i. 25.

These thoughts might easily be developed ; but it is unnecessary, as—theoretically at least—we are all familiar with the idea. Nevertheless, there is often a danger that we may lose sight of its essence—that we may look upon celibacy as a mere disciplinary law of the Church, made for prudential reasons, and our duty as merely to abstain from every thought or act which may endanger its observance—to look on celibacy, in short, as a negative rather than a positive precept, forbidding us to do this or that, but not adding anything very special to our daily spiritual life, beyond absence of sin. Yet this gives one a very inadequate idea of what should be to us a most positive virtue, affecting our whole lives, giving to the priesthood our greatest glory, and to our lives the note of heroism.

Now the positive side of the virtue of celibacy is in theory plain enough, at least in its main outline. Woman was created to be man's helpmate, and she fulfils her calling in the first place by her power of sympathy. There is no human sympathy like that of a woman, and granted that it is used within proper limits and restrictions, it is one of the greatest helps which man can have in meeting the troubles and storms of life. The care and sympathy of his mother in youth, of his wife in the heyday of life, of his daughters in old age, are the most valuable helps to many a man of the world, to enable him to face with success the difficulties of his state. In like manner when he wants counsel and advice he turns to that sex who have specially the gift of entering into another's difficulties and helping him through them.

The essence of celibacy is that when we seek sympathy and counsel in our troubles and trials, or our work, and in all the affairs of life, we turn not to human sympathisers, but to those whom we know by faith—to our Lord in the Tabernacle, to His mother, to our patron saints, to our guardian angel, etc. The sympathy we get

differs from that which is to be obtained in the world in the first place in the absence of the feeling of sense, which is the first and easiest remedy and that which we should look for as the natural accompaniment of sympathy in the world. This does not mean that it is less real: on the contrary, it is far more real and more powerful. If a priest is sent any great trouble or anxiety, and instead of seeking human consolation and guidance, goes straight into his Church, to pour out his soul in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, or before the altars or statues of our Lady or the Saints, he will come forth strengthened in spirit, and having received the gift of counsel in a far higher degree than would ever have been the case had he had recourse to the solace and company of a wife or family or relations. And this counsel and strength will increase in degree in proportion as he has banished from his life the ordinary sensible consolations to be obtained from human sympathy.

He does not on this account love his family and his friends less; on the contrary, he loves them more, though in a different and more mortified manner. The relations between a priest and his family must be essentially different from what they were when he was a layman. His pleasure in being in their company, the joy of their society, has to be restricted and curtailed; often for long years—as in the case of foreign missionaries—he may be cut off from them altogether; but his true charity towards them, his wish for their highest good, his readiness to sacrifice himself for them are not less but far greater than before, and both he and they have the consolation of knowing the power of his prayers to help them.

The great exemplar of this virtue, St. Aloysius, may be quoted as a special example. Of him it is written that he even denied himself the sensible consolation of his mother's countenance, and his detachment from all the

consolations of sense were such that we can hardly realise. Yet he speaks confidently of his affection for his family and friends. He declared that he offered daily to Almighty God in one hand his relations and worldly friends, in the other his fellow members of the Society of Jesus, and that both were continually in his mind.

In such a matter as this it is not suggested that we should aim at the height of chastity practised by St. Aloysius. The particular degree of reserve alluded to above, however admirable in him—and the fact that the Church records it with approval in the official lessons on his feast is sufficient proof of this—would be in us not only affectation, but wholly unsuited to the conditions in which we live. Nevertheless, we have to imitate the same spirit in our measure and our social intercourse with our family must be limited both in degree and in character. The very fact of the sensible sympathy being so strong between mother and son, or between brother and sister, is one of the reasons—and not the least of them—why the Synods of Westminster prohibit a priest's female relatives from living in his house, without special circumstances to justify it, lest such close intercourse might draw the heart away from that higher kind of sympathy which we seek from Almighty God in prayer.

We should in fact be exceedingly foolish if we were to limit our aspirations to the avoidance of those things in which there might be a danger of leading us into sin. That is indeed the minimum to which we are all bound ; but there are degrees in this virtue, and we can all of us aim at a higher detachment from sensible consolations than that to which we are bound under sin, and the higher we can put the practice of this virtue, the nearer we shall get to Almighty God, and the greater will be the power of our prayers.

From consideration of our relations with our own

family, we proceed to the question of our attitude to members of the other sex generally and the need of strict limitation and mortification in this matter. In discussing this question, we shall appeal to the authority of a small brochure, privately printed some forty years ago, by one who can speak with as great authority as any man living or dead, on the practice of the virtue in circumstances of the present day in this country.[1] It will be worth our while to study what he says in considerable detail.

He begins by quoting in favour of the rules he lays down some widely different authorities, such as St. Augustine, Thomas à Kempis, St. Ignatius and St. Francis de Sales. These great men lived at different epochs, amidst different surroundings, and in different circumstances. Their types of piety differed widely from one another. If, then, we find that they are all agreed in recommending a particular line of conduct, a very strong presumption is created in favour of their recommendation.

He continues :—

" [Our duty] is indeed all summed up in the one word of the *Imitation*, ' Be not familiar with any woman.' This familiarity is the one thing which according to all is to be avoided. And if we ask what precisely is meant

[1] After this lapse of time, there seems no reason to conceal the name of the writer, who was the Rev. Robert Whitty, S.J. He was in many respects a remarkable man. Educated chiefly in Ireland, he finished his course at St. Edmund's College, where he remained some years as a Professor ; then at a comparatively early age he became Cardinal Wiseman's Vicar-General, which post he held during the exciting times of the so-called Papal Aggression in 1850. A few years later he joined the Society of Jesus, in which he afterwards became Provincial, and then English Consulter to the General. Certainly no man has a better right than he to speak on the subject before us.

by the word, we may say that at least it means, as regards the external conduct of a priest, the avoidance of long or frequent intercourse with women, even by letters; as regards his heart, a firm purpose never to seek consolation or recreation in female society; and, finally, it means that the counsel *nunquam solus cum sola* should be as far as possible the rule of daily life. Of course this rule is observed so long as he is in the sight of others or is easily visible. Priests are bound by vow to celibacy, and as a consequence the saints quoted above regard them as bound in prudence to treat with women on business only, and never to look on them as companions or intimate friends."

A little further on he anticipates possible objections based on the condition of modern society, especially in this country. He writes:—

"We are compelled to look at the world as it is, and it cannot be denied that in an English-speaking society a priest is expected to do much more than administer the sacraments and preach or catechise. There is always a great deal of mental as well as bodily misery to be met with. This misery is much increased in the English-speaking world by differences in religion, by the circumstances connected with conversions to the faith and the persecutions to which these give occasion. On the other hand, centuries of persecution have created in our Catholic laity generally a larger and deeper confidence than is perhaps to be found in other countries. By their very nature women are inclined to lean on others. What more natural than that many should look to the priest —their 'director,' as they love to call him—as their one and only guide in all their doubts and troubles? Again, a priest has frequently to call in the aid of women in his efforts to reclaim souls from sin. It will often happen that he can reach the ignorant and sinful only through

the co-operation of nuns or good women living in the world, or of both. Hence innumerable occasions of treating with women will arise to which he is compelled by his very duty as a priest.

"All this is true. Still there is nothing in these modern circumstances to justify a departure from the reserve inculcated by the saints. Nay, these circumstances only the more strongly confirm the saying of the *Imitation*, 'we should have charity towards all, but familiarity is not expedient.' Charity is universal. Intimacy or familiarity is necessarily confined to a few. If a priest acts from charity, he will be ready to receive all and at all seasons. But if he follows natural inclination, he will necessarily waste on a few the time and heart that might have been given to many. . . .

"Still on the plea of the difference of their times from ours, it may be said that the reserve which they recommended and practised has become impossible for a priest at the present day. It may be alleged that he is indeed bound to avoid sin, and therefore all proximate occasions of sin, whether the danger be to himself or to others. But he must be natural in his behaviour towards women no less than towards men; otherwise his ministry will be to a great extent sterile and his confessional will be shunned. And after all, every Christian, it may be said, is bound to avoid sin. Why should a priest be more on his guard than an ordinary layman?

"We have thus two models of behaviour in a priest put before us—the reserved and the natural. Is the reserve of the saints possible nowadays, and if so, is it desirable? In answering this question let us bear in mind that a priest is ordained not only, as the Apostle says, to offer up gifts and sacrifices for sin, but is likewise sent to all who are living in ignorance and sin, 'qui condolere possit iis qui ignorant et errant.' Hence the main occupation of a priest in charge of souls is to

prevent sin by instruction, and to absolve from sin in the Sacrament of Penance. In other words, to teach Christian doctrine and to hear Confessions may be said to be the sum of a priest's work in dealing with souls. For Baptism and the sacraments of the dying are only other forms of loosing souls from the bonds of sin. The question then is, does reserve with women create any hindrance in this essential work of a priest? Unquestionably not. Protestant writers, indeed, looking at the Church from outside, and not understanding the real feeling of Catholics, have sometimes supposed that they prefer going to Confession to an easy-going, self-indulgent priest, rather than one who leads a mortified, unworldly life. But all practical Catholics well know there cannot be a greater mistake. Penitents seek indeed one who will be patient and kind. In proportion to the weight of sin which they feel, they long for a man of God, who in the words of the Apostle already quoted, 'Condolere possit iis qui ignorant et errant,' and one on whose judgment they can rely. They want one who will treat with them in God's name and for His sake. This being so, is it not manifest that the paternal reserve of the saints is more sure to attract confidence than the familiarity of the natural man?"

A similar idea was no doubt in the mind of Cardinal Manning when he wrote that "The priest who is seldom seen in society is the priest whom men desire most to have beside them when they die." By being "seldom in society" he of course meant mixing in the society of men and women as one of themselves. For it is abundantly possible to go among mankind and freely mix with them even in social gatherings, in the performance of one's pastoral duty, while at the same time keeping all the reserve pleaded for by the writer of the pamphlet and observing the rules of custody of the eyes and of the

senses inculcated by spiritual writers. In adapting these rules to ourselves, it may be of use to consider some of the various classes of females to whom they may apply.

First there are young girls who are almost or quite children. We easily get familiar with them, call them by their Christian names, join in their play or amusements, and should rightly resent the idea of there being anything wrong or even dangerous. Yet too much familiarity with the young is never very desirable. The author of the *Imitation* specially warns us against it. Their society is pleasant and innocent; yet the very simplicity and irresponsibility of youth tends to draw us rather to a lower than a higher level. In the case of a priest among his people however, he has to bear in mind that as time passes the child grows into a girl. Familiarity once admitted is not easily broken off, though a time comes when it is more than undesirable, and finally it becomes a scandal to others and a danger to oneself. Sometimes one has heard a priest address a young lady by her Christian name, perhaps in a contracted form; which sounds startling; and the explanation is to be sought in the familiarity acquired in past years when she was only a child. If a proper reserve had been maintained then, the familiarity would never have reached its final state.

Secondly, there are good and devout young ladies in the congregation—Children of Mary, perhaps, who are zealous to run their confraternity. They come to the Presbytery to discuss their plans and schemes, and to organise the Confraternity devotions. Or they may be regular workers in the sacristy, members of the Altar Society, or those who help in collecting money, or in visiting the poor, and such-like. Or they may be penitents, who come to discuss matters of conscience. We must not be thrown off our guard by their being pious. There may be danger to us, or even in their

weakness, to them, in that which at first sight looks so proper and desirable. Means must be found to give them all the spiritual help they want, while avoiding all kind of familiarity.

Thirdly, going to the other extreme, there are the evil-minded and designing, who would love nothing better than the ruin of the priest. Their power is great, their patience greater, and their cleverness prevents them from being fathomed. The only method to meet them is to keep them at a distance from the beginning. Once they have acquired influence over one, they will be more than difficult to shake off.

After this we may mention various categories, the officious who wish to know everything, the priest's own business as well as theirs ; the idle who want to gossip, to take offence at trifles and then make it up, and in so doing to acquire influence ; then the class of elderly ladies who have no sinister design, but love all kinds of ecclesiastical gossip to fill their time and thoughts ; then those with whom the priest comes into daily official contact, such as the schoolmistress or housekeeper ; and, lastly, one who may belong to several of the above categories, who is truly motherly, and taking pity on a priest's loneliness, wants to tend him in his wants ; to keep such a one with proper reserve requires no small determination.

For all these classes of females, the same law holds good—charity and helpfulness to all, familiarity with none. There can be no danger without previous familiarity, and though in some cases familiarity can exist without danger, there are other reasons which have been given why it should be shunned. Once more we can quote the same writer :—

" The fear for one's chastity is only one of the reasons, and often not the most important, for this priestly

reserve, as indeed is clear from the lives of the saints themselves. Had St. Augustine, or St. Francis of Sales, for example, any practical reason to fear for themselves, or would there have been any danger of scandal to others in their case from a more free and easy way of treating with women from that which they adopted? Yet we have seen the rule which they laid down for themselves."

Alas, however, that we cannot conclude this conference without alluding to actual danger. The same writer proceeds :—

" In truth now, as at all times, the main difficulty lies in the human heart itself and not in external circumstances. It will appear at times as if a departure from such reserved behaviour is not only justifiable but absolutely necessary for the well-being of a particular soul. In this matter the danger lies precisely in exceptional cases in which the priest is liable to be deceived by the appearance of good. He may easily forget that in all such cases a triple danger is involved—a danger for himself, a danger for the soul with which he is dealing, and a danger of scandal in the world that is always looking on. And these dangers are so distinct that even if assured of his own personal safety, he is not thereby secure as to the soul of the penitent, or even if both feel blameless in their own hearts, disedification may be occasioned in others."

Following out the danger to the priest himself, the next stage may easily be his sensible appreciation of the devotion of his penitent or friend, and her kindness to him. Gradually the care and attention she shows him undermines the sternness of his vocation. He loses his sense of spirituality and the saviour of his priesthood languishes. His mass is no longer to him what it once was ; his church has ceased to be the abode of peace and

prayer ; his power of seeking consolation in the Tabernacle is gone ; his pastoral work has become irksome to him ; he almost regrets the day when he bound himself to celibacy. What wonder if he at length casts off his priesthood, and " retires " or disappears, whether or not it be known to his people what the state of affairs really is ?

Such a falling away is, alas, possible even without, or at least independently of, any criminal intercourse. Instances occur to mind when such has happened to a priest at an age when one would have thought the danger from violence of passion was almost over. His lack of appreciation of the positive virtue of celibacy paved the way, and his giving up his priesthood followed. But for all of us there is the fatal possibility of a more complete fall and spiritual ruin in its fullest sense. Of this, however, we may rest assured that when a final fall takes place and one of our brethren abandons his priesthood, it is not the result of an isolated action or a first fall. Judas received many warnings and calls to repentance before our Lord addressed to him those last sad words, " What thou dost do quickly "—as though to say, get it over and done with. When a priest first goes wrong, we may be sure that he receives many a similar call to repentance. And he has the sacrament of Penance within his grasp, to help him to recover his stability, which, thank God, often bears fruit. But the time may come when warnings neglected, graces set at nought, occasions of sin not avoided, gradually do their work and shipwreck ensues, final and in a sense almost irrevocable. In such case at least we can bear in mind that it never came within the bounds of possibility until such rules and aspirations as we have been pleading for were set aside. One cannot fall over a precipice until one first goes near the edge.

There is no sorrow in a priest's life to compare with

the fall of a brother priest. In such a case we pray indeed that He who is all mercy, who gave him his first call, will rescue him whom He loves ; and any act of ours which will help towards such rescue we shall esteem as the greatest of acts of charity. But if we have to face this sorrow, let us also draw our own lesson. " He who thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall." Let it be a stimulus to us to renew our resolutions, to rise higher in the scale of celibacy, to realise its sacredness and the dignity which it gives to our lives. " How beautiful is the chaste generation with glory : because it is known both to God and to men . . . it triumpheth for ever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts."[1]

And if the dangers we have to meet are great, our trust in God's help should be greater. Let us end with one more quotation from the brochure :—

" Taking then all circumstances into account, it is clear that the preservation of perfect purity of heart in a priest is far above the power of unaided nature. It behoves us therefore to consider what means must be used for attaining this end. Our Blessed Lord's words to the Apostles, ' Vigilate et orate ne intretis in tentationem ' apply to this case in their fullest sense. All external precautions will be insufficient without prayer, and prayer without such precautions will be like calling on God to work a miracle. Above all things, therefore, a priest must start with the conviction that this work is supernatural, and that he needs constant light and aid from God not only to save souls, but likewise to keep himself from sinking in his efforts to save others from destruction."

[1] *Wisdom* iv. 1, 2.

CONFERENCE V

OBEDIENCE

THERE is no more solemn moment in the whole Ordination Service than when the newly ordained priest kneels before his Bishop, who, taking his hands between his own, asks him the question, "Promittis mihi et successoribus meis reverentiam et obedientiam?" and on receiving the requisite promise, kisses him on the cheek, saying the words, "Pax Domini sit semper tecum."

The words "reverentiam et obedientiam" may perhaps be freely rendered as "a loyal obedience," and the solemnity of the surroundings when the promise is made should not only serve to impress it on the mind and memory, but is also an indication of the importance which the Church attaches to that virtue in the future life of the priest.

The virtue of obedience is one which we are accustomed to read about as the foundation of the religious life, and it has been practised in a high degree in the various religious orders and congregations. We have often heard of special instances to illustrate this. A Jesuit Provincial receives a letter one morning informing him that he is to relinquish his office, and to devote himself to another work, of an altogether humble description, and immediately he prepares to leave for his new sphere of labour at the earliest possible moment. A Franciscan missionary is commanded to leave one centre of work, and to proceed to another, perhaps a thousand miles

away, and before the day is out, he has started on his journey. These, indeed, are special instances of an extreme nature ; but the general type is common to all religious.

Moreover, obedience to command is carried into all the details of their daily lives. The bell summons them to the various duties of the day, and they aim at instant obedience, so that a perfect religious will immediately leave off anything he is saying or writing in order to give a willing and punctual compliance. The story is often quoted of the Carthusians, who speak only once a week, leaving off in the middle of a sentence at the sound of the bell to resume the thread in a week's time.

Again, no work is undertaken by them without the direct command of their superior, but whatever he directs has to be done at once, and to the best of their power, even though they may not see the reason of his command, or may even in their own mind think it unwise. In the more perfect stages of obedience they are called upon to submit their judgment and opinions to those of the superior. It is no wonder that a strict novitiate is enjoined to train them to such obedience as this.

In reading these descriptions, however, there seems to be in the case of a secular priest some unreality. He will never be called upon to practise obedience of this kind. If his Bishop moves him from one mission to another, he will not usually do so in this sudden manner. If the priest has reached a certain age or standing, his Bishop will consult his feelings before appointing him to any new work, to ascertain whether it is such that he thinks he can do, or to see whether he has any great objection to it. In a secular priest's daily life he is not called to his various duties by the sound of the bell at all in the same way as a religious. He is expected to be punctual when he has to perform pastoral duties, and

his day is usually mapped out by necessary limitations caused by his work—sometimes regular, often most irregular and unforeseen,—but that is all. He is in no case expected to break off suddenly at the sound of a bell in the manner described.

Then again, religious obedience is often described as a "passive virtue." According to Rodriguez,[1] a religious who practises it in perfection makes himself like a dead body, which has no movement of its own, but is taken from place to place by the living. Surely nothing can be more unlike than this to the condition of a secular priest, who has to be all activity and energy. He has to use his own judgment in everything, and only rarely receives any definite command or guidance from his Bishop or Superior.

What then? Does a secular priest not have to practise this virtue? or is his obedience at least on a lower level than that of a religious? This is surely a pertinent question and calls for a careful answer.

A little consideration will show us that the obedience of a secular priest differs from that of a religious not in degree but in kind, and that even if we grant that for the perfection of the virtue we may have to look to the religious state, the obedience practised by a secular may be, and commonly is, in many respects harder of accomplishment. Let us examine this in detail.

The obedience of a religious may be compared with that of a private soldier. The command is given, and he has nothing to do but to obey. The strength of an army is dependent upon the unanimity and promptness of their obedience. The orders are given by the officer in command, in an absolute manner, and he bears all the responsibility: the soldier has no say as to whether the order is wise or unwise; he has only to execute it. The work of the typical religious includes much of this

[1] *Fifth Treatise*, chapter vi.

principle and acquires proportionate strength. The superior views the situation, and, aided by the advice of whatever form of consultation his particular rule provides, he determines what is to be done. He communicates his decision to whom it may concern, and they have at once to receive the commands and execute them.

The obedience of a secular priest, on the other hand, is more like that of an inferior officer, who while he is leading others, is also in contact with one in supreme command, helping him, advising him, and sharing in part his responsibilities. One of the earliest experiences of a priest when he first goes on the mission is to find the power and influence which he exerts over his people. This power he is free to use with little restriction. He may use it in subservience to his rector—if he is a curate —or to his Bishop, to help on their work, to make the people loyal towards them, and to endeavour that everything shall proceed in harmony with their wishes and plans; or he may criticise their ideas, speak and act against them, and take refuge in self-defence on his "rights" and the position he occupies. Undoubtedly there will be rules and regulations laid down by his superiors which will grate on him and of which he may at least profess not to see the use. When young, he may be ready to find fault with the work to which he is appointed, and be discontented; and when he grows into years, he may get the impression that he is not appreciated, that others are unjustly preferred before him, and so forth. To put it on its lowest ground, a priest of this kind is a continual trouble to his Bishop, and a source not of strength but of weakness.

Now the remedy for this evil frame of mind is by no means to become passive, or to resemble a dead body which is moved about by others. He is called upon to do something more difficult to human nature—to act

positively in loyal subservience to his superior. Such obedience is less tangible than that of a religious, and in that proportion it is harder.[1] It involves a whole spirit of loyalty, and the very vagueness of its application makes it harder. We are not brought to book, so to say, by the advantage of a definite command, and yet with all our outward liberty, we are called upon to regulate our whole life on submission and obedience. Now if there is a course of action which goes against our taste and judgment, it is comparatively easy to overcome our reluctance and to perform outwardly what we are told to do; but when we have no definite command given, and are simply called upon of our own free will to act positively to forward some particular course of action, this is often far harder.

Yet this is what a secular priest is continually called upon to do. His rector runs the parish on lines which he considers old-fashioned and out of date; he seems to discourage new works which the needs of the day seem to call for. There may be some truth underlying these criticisms, though probably there is much to be urged on the other side. However this may be, a priest in the flower of his youth and activity can do much to direct the course of public feeling among the parishioners. He can either defend his rector to the best of his ability, explain that there may be many circumstances, important factors of the case, which are not publicly known; and try and carry things on in accordance with the rector's ideas and schemes; or he can fan the dis-

[1] It is not intended to deny that there are cases in which a religious has to use initiative or judgment when under orders: but it can hardly be questioned that the other is the ordinary course of things; and that while a secular priest has to use his judgment and initiative far more, he has proportionately less guidance in the way of command. He has to depend on his own judgment; yet all the time his decisions must be actuated by submission and obedience.

content by joining in the criticism, with alas ! too great effect, for discontent easily spreads and develops. Needless to say, the priest with the spirit of obedience adopts the former course ; the one without such spirit the latter. But in neither case is he or ought he to be in a passive state ; he has to be all life and action.

In like manner, when a Bishop wishes to change the work of a priest, and offers him a new mission, undoubtedly one who makes difficulties about accepting this or that place, or any that does not fit in with his tastes and requirements, is not showing the spirit of obedience ; and one who holds himself passive and ready to undertake whatever his Bishop suggests is doing better. Nevertheless, there may be a better stage still and a more obedient one, which is to discuss the matter with his Bishop and give him the advice he seeks. For one of the most important factors in helping him to make up his mind is to know what his priests think they are qualified to undertake. If the priest remains passive, all the onus of deciding is thrown on the Bishop ; and though this is far better than opposing him or raising difficulties, it is not the most perfect course. But, granted that he has talked it over in the manner indicated, should the Bishop decide not in accordance with his wishes—which will frequently occur, in view of the many and complicated needs of the diocese—then is the time for the obedient priest to accept his Bishop's decision as the voice of God, and to set himself to the work indicated however distasteful it may be to himself. The ruling idea in his mind should ever be, how he can be of the greatest service to his Bishop and help to lighten his heavy burden. It is difficult enough to govern wisely at any time : it becomes ten times harder when it is a case of governing unwilling subjects. An obedient priest will strive to make it not harder but easier.

We can perhaps contrast our obedience with that in the army. There discipline is carried to a high pitch, as is necessary for efficiency, but interior obedience there is none. Most soldiers seem to spend the greater part of their time in finding fault, sometimes in strong language, with the orders of their commanders. There are indeed means of enforcing obedience and the commands have to be obeyed: but the thought of rendering the commander's task easier does not enter in. In the case of priestly obedience, no such material sanction exists, or at least it plays a very secondary part. The whole relation between him who commands and the subject who obeys is on a spiritual and sacred footing, and enforced almost entirely by such considerations—for the punishments at a Bishop's disposal, such as censures or the like, are very rarely available, and, even if available, only used when other motives fail. Hence the practice of obedience becomes a positive virtue.

If we wish to find out whether we ourselves are practising the proper spirit, we can do so by watching an unguarded and spontaneous conversation, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."[1] If we find ourselves instinctively talking against those above us, it is a sure sign that we are not obedient men; if, on the other hand, we are truly obedient in mind, this will show itself by the whole turn of our talk about our superiors. It is hardly too much to say that it is this spirit of obedience which alone will make a priest's life happy, or even bearable.

We may ask, then, are there no circumstances in which we are justified in resisting authority without prejudice to our obedience? Is a truly obedient priest precluded from taking part in any action which has for its object the resistance of episcopal or other rulers? Surely the negative answer is indicated by the whole

[1] St. Matt. xii. 34.

practice of the Church and of Canon Law which gives and regulates the right of appeal in certain cases. And we all know of instances in which saints have resisted authority. Cannot we safely follow their example?

The answer in the first place is that they were saints. A person who has such perfect control over his lower nature may venture on a course which to us would be dangerous. And indeed resistance to authority is always dangerous. The author of the *Imitation* warns us how many people are moved with passion and mistake it for zeal. So long as we are obeying, we are on safe ground: there is no motive possible to us but that of obedience. Once change our condition to one of resistance, and there may be hundreds of motives such as injured pride, self-will, want of charity to our superiors, and the like which may be influencing us to a far greater extent than we know.

If, then, we think it necessary at any time to resist our superiors, our first care should be to test ourselves, to see whether we are in truth actuated by unworthy motives. There are two means ready to hand. One is prayer, earnest and long continued; the other is prudent advice. If we go to a disinterested party, whether a priest or a Bishop—for laymen will not be in a position to understand the circumstances—the adviser will be better able to judge of the position than we are, from the very fact that he is disinterested. Then he will realise better than we do that there may be circumstances unknown to us, on which our superior has based his action, and in many cases charity demands that we should believe such circumstances to exist until the contrary is proved. Then let us beware of the plea which is so often put forward by the priest who is by nature disobedient, that he is not contending for himself—so far as he is concerned he would willingly put up with the injustice—but that it is his duty to defend a

principle for the sake of the rights of other priests similarly situated. In most cases this is in truth a thin covering of self-will. His first statement is indeed most cogent : it *is* oftentimes far better to put up with supposed injustice, which after all may be *only* supposed ; and a really obedient man will fall back on that whenever he possibly can. It is only when he is advised by a competent authority that he ought to act, that he will adopt a position so distasteful to him.

Granted, however, that a priest is advised that he ought not to let matters rest as they are, let him act with confidence and all charity. His first step will of course be to see his Bishop and talk the matter out. This stage, indeed is fairly often reached. Cardinal Vaughan quotes a great authority of his day on obedience, speaking to him as follows :—

" In his administrative capacity, a Bishop may err in judgment, he may be narrow, inconsiderate and at fault. This may be a trial to a priest ; but his duty is perfectly clear. He should say, ' God can appoint such a one to be my superior, and the means of my sanctification. He stands to me in the place of God ; I must obey.' "

Nevertheless, he continues :—

" The priest in such a case may legitimately make respectful representations to his Bishop. It may be his duty to make such representations. Let him do this once, but let him beware of morally forcing the Bishop by his importunities."

If these representations are made in a proper spirit, and with due submission, they ought not to form an act of hostility : on the contrary, they may in fact be the highest form of obedience, for the priest in this manner may put before his Bishop facts of which he was unaware,

[1] *The Young Priest*, p. 116.

or considerations which had not occurred to him. In the great majority of cases an understanding may be arrived at in this manner.

In the few instances in which the Bishop does not modify his action and the priest remains of the same opinion, it may be necessary to carry the matter further. If so, the spirit of charity becomes doubly needful. No word of "tyranny" or "injustice" or "ill-temper" applied to his superior should escape him, and a favourable interpretation should always be given to his superior's actions. Let the appellant priest fortify himself continually with prayer, so as to obtain the gift of counsel, and let this be joined to a special intercession on behalf of the superior against whom he is acting. These are ordinary means for ensuing his purity of intention; and if these means alone are taken, we may be confident as to the result. For whatever the final verdict may be, if we have taken the requisite precautions, it will be a victory, for God's will is done. When the late Cardinal Vaughan, then Bishop of Salford, had his long dispute with the Jesuits in Rome, when the letter came to him announcing the result, before he opened it, while still ignorant of its contents, he went to the tomb of St. Peter to return thanks.

Alas, that this spirit is so often wanting in the appeals of our clergy. All those who are acquainted with the Holy See will bear witness to the readiness to hear the appeal of the weak against the strong, and all such appeals have sympathetic consideration. The fact that the majority of them go in favour of the Bishops is an unfortunate testimony to the frequent insufficiency of the grounds of appeal, and indicates a want of the spirit of obedience.

Such, however, is not always the case, and one can point to instances in which the appeal has been conscientiously made, even though it proved unsuccessful,

and some also in which the verdict has been in favour of the priest and against his superior. In such rare cases, it is hardly necessary to add there must be no note of triumph or of self-congratulation. A disagreeable duty has been done, and properly accomplished, and we go back ready to resume our work for God and souls.

But it is not necessary to dwell on this eventuality, considering how exceedingly rare is its occurrence. Let us end as we began by alluding to the words at our Ordination :—

" While the sacred body and blood of Christ are still within him, he gives his newly consecrated hands into the hands of the Bishop, who says : ' Promittis mihi et successoribus meis reverentiam et obedientiam ? ' To which he replies ' Promitto.' And as the personal fruit of obedience is peace of conscience and the peace of God, the bishop adds, ' Pax Domini sit semper tecum.'

" The formal acceptance by the Church of the solemn promise of obedience made by the priest contains an assurance and a pledge full of encouragement and consolation to the priest himself.

" He is an officer in the army of Christ : he has promised loyalty and obedience. All the works of his ministry undertaken in obedience to his Bishop, or in conformity with the discipline and canons of the service are henceforth to be accounted not as private and particular works, but as works belonging to the Christian ministry. They are of a higher order ; they are the works of Christ Himself, and deserve a special reward."[1]

[1] Cardinal Vaughan, *The Young Priest*, p. 119.

APPENDIX ON OBEDIENCE AT THE SEMINARY

It would seem at first sight an anomaly that if the obedience practised by a secular priest is so different from that of a religious, in the time of preparation at the Seminary the life is modelled on that of a religious congregation ; for although it is no doubt easy compared with that of any religious Order, it is, nevertheless, of much the same character, and the occasions of practising obedience in a Seminary are very similar to those in a monastery. There are fixed hours for rising, for prayers and mass, for study, recreation and meals, and there are times of silence—as after night prayers, or before the morning meditation. The students are, in fact, expected continually to obey the bell as it calls them from one duty to another in much the same way as a religious does. Why, it may be asked, if their future obedience and future life are to be so different from that of a religious are they asked to go through a daily routine at the Seminary which seems to be based on theirs, or at least to be similar to it ?

This is a pertinent and natural question ; but the answer is simple. The essential difference is that one is permanent and the other temporary. A Seminarist is called upon to exercise the easier forms of obedience, to train him for the harder. He leads a regular daily life, in obedience to authority made known to us by definite commands and by fixed rules, in order that he may acquire a habit of submission which may give him his

tone when he shall have gone forth from the Seminary and have no such definite rules or commands to guide him.

It is this consideration which gives the true importance to the daily observance of such rules as he has. We sometimes hear the question, " Is it a sin to break a rule ? " Surely this is looking at the question from an unworthy standpoint. Theologians say that it is not a sin even for a religious who has taken a special vow of obedience to break a small point of his rule ; much less can it be a sin for a Seminarist, who has taken no such vow. But there is a higher way of looking at it than this. It is not a question whether this or that isolated rule binds under sin ; the question is rather how the Seminarist's general attitude towards the rules is affecting his training, how far the object for which they have been imposed upon him is attained, or how far impeded, by the spirit in which he accepts them. The proper spirit should be something of this kind. He has come to the Seminary to undergo a definite training, which is administered by those set over him, through the instrumentality of the rules. It is the traditional Catholic training, which has formed holy priests and even saints. All the incidents of his daily life are part and parcel of it. To neglect or put aside any of them deliberately is to put aside part of that training, with its corresponding means of sanctification, both natural and supernatural. To put it on its lowest grounds, he cannot afford to lose it.

Indeed, one would hope that a well-behaved Seminarist would never deliberately and of set purpose break rules. Small failings through thoughtlessness, or in the weakness of the moment, are indeed excusable ; but that is essentially different from open and premeditated breaches of discipline. A Seminarist who frequently fails to come down in the morning, or who evades his

work when he conveniently can, who is slack and unpunctual at his various duties, is misusing his time and omitting that which the Church and his Bishop reasonably expect him to do. He may be clever enough to conceal his idleness; he may even after an ill-spent term make up time and pass his examinations by cramming up at the end—for which some have a great facility; but he will never make up the training he has lost, nor will he obtain the graces which would have been his had he used the means which God gave him to obtain them.

Moreover, the spirit of obedience or disobedience in community life is very catching. One grumbler will make many. The Seminarist owes a duty to the institution which has done and is doing so much for him, to set up a high ideal for himself which will spread itself to others and affect the whole life led within the walls of the Seminary. It is a duty which he owes to his Bishop and likewise to his fellow students.

This whole question is so vital to the life of the Seminary that we may be excused for appealing to high authority in support of what has been said. In his *Lex Levitarum*, the late Bishop Hedley discusses it at some length, and all that he says will repay careful reading. His first conclusion is that although single rules can in single cases be broken without sin, "It is sinful and a sin against obedience to violate them in grave matters, or with a persistence which causes grave results in the house. But," he continues, "the aspirant to the holy priesthood should take a higher view of the rules of his Seminary. They are, indeed, not fetters to bind his liberty, but steps or occasions to deepen his purity of heart, and his love of his heavenly Father. In themselves they are wise and useful, tending to the well-being of each individual. Even therefore if they carried no obligation, it would be the part of a true servant of God

to observe them religiously. Obedience is the most essential virtue of a heart which aspires to imitate Jesus Christ ; a real, interior obedience, not merely external, but grounded upon general humility of heart. It is obedience which most effectively clothes the spirit with the mind and temper of Christ. It is obedience which has the promise of victory over passion, and of success in the ministry of souls. To promote and to deepen in the character the spirit of obedience is certainly one of the principal purposes of the training of a priest. . . . A life of rule which is accepted and loved is the very best preparation for the priesthood because it is the very best discipline of a truly Christ-like mind, and the most effective instrument for acquiring perfection. [1]

[1] *Lex Levitarum*, p. 67.

CONFERENCE VI

THE RELIGIOUS EXERCISES OF THE PRIEST

THERE is a sense in which it may be said that the religious exercises of a secular priest are of more importance than those of a religious ; for he has no definite rule to impose most of them upon him, while from the nature of his life they often have to give way before the pressure of work. It has been said that the sanctification of a religious is effected primarily by his religious exercises, and secondarily by his work ; but that of a secular is effected primarily by his work and only secondarily by his religious exercises. Of course in those exact words we cannot accept the statement : it is something of a paradox ; but a paradox usually covers a real truth, and in this case the truth is that there is always a danger of a secular priest failing to realise the necessity for such regular exercises from the fact of their having so often to be postponed or curtailed or even omitted in favour of works of charity, and from having no regular binding rule for any except the recitation of the Divine Office. There may indeed be individual days when a priest dispenses himself from all else : but as a regular practice, he well knows that other exercises are an absolute necessity if he is to lead a priestly life.

In the new Codex of Canon Law, for the first time we find an enumeration of the exercises expected of a priest[1]—not indeed binding under sin, but the norm put

[1] Canon 125.

before us by the Church—*ratione sacerdotii*. They include, besides his mass and Office, daily Meditation, Rosary, visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and Examination of Conscience, and a Retreat at least every third year. It may be well to take these in order and say a few words about each.

Mass

There is no need to emphasise the power and consolation to a priest of his daily mass. It is the direct object of his priesthood and the one which he is least likely to allow to pass out of his mind. In view of his being a priest, he is bound to offer the Holy Sacrifice on Sundays and on the chief feasts of the year[1]—Christmas, Easter, etc. In practice in this country, he is usually bound, *ratione officii*, to celebrate much more often: in many cases daily mass is his duty; in almost all, several times a week is his minimum. One result of this is a tendency to look on his mass as a duty for the sake of the people who hear it and to lose sight in some degree of its effect on himself. In days gone by when daily mass was not usual, we have stories told of how a travelling priest or a French *émigré* might come in and ask to say mass, and the priest who was actually vesting for the parish mass, would let the visiting priest say it, and himself go to breakfast. Happily, however, this state of things has passed away. At the present day the vast majority of the clergy are only too pleased to celebrate daily. They may indeed like to omit a morning occasionally, while on a holiday: possibly they are sometimes over free in giving themselves a rest out of holiday time: but this is the exception. Even the practice recommended by St. Alphonsus of omitting one day in every week out of reverence, now seems to be a thing of the past: the movement of Pius X in favour of frequent or daily com-

[1] Canon 805.

munion seems to have swept away the last trace of it. At any rate, most priests of necessity, and others by preference, usually celebrate daily, and no reform is called for in this respect.

When, however, we come to the circumstances of celebration, we find a good deal calling for attention. There are indeed many priests who begin the day with mental prayer, and say the Preparation for mass, so that when the time comes they are ready to celebrate with devotion : but there are many who do not act so well. Dr. Grant, the first Bishop of Southwark, used to lament the number of priests who came straight from their bedrooms to the altar, and he would quote this as one of the greatest obstacles to the spread of Catholicity in this country. It is manifest that such a practice is fatal to the devout celebration of the Holy Mysteries. The new Codex of Canon Law has drawn special attention to this by enacting that a priest should make a proper preparation and thanksgiving as of obligation.[1]

Yet there are often practical difficulties about a satisfactory reform in this matter. Those who say mass at a convent, for example, are in nearly every case expected at an early hour, and on arrival are usually shown into the sacristy as a matter of course ; to get up sufficiently soon to have time to spare needs considerable stimulus. A difficulty of the opposite kind is created when a priest has to say a late mass, whether on a weekday or a Sunday. He naturally makes it the occasion of a long rest, and too often prolongs it to the very last minute, arriving in the sacristy only just in time to vest. If it is a Sunday, and he is duplicating, he makes that an excuse for sparing himself, so that he may not be over fatigued.

Neither of these difficulties are insuperable ; but in

[1] " Sacerdos ne omittat ad Eucharistici Sacrificii oblationem sese piis precibus disponere, eoque expleto, gratias Deo pro tanto beneficio agere " (Canon 810).

practice they commonly hold the field. Without any drastic remedies, however, it is sometimes possible to suggest at least a partial way out of the difficulty. A priest who has to walk some distance to the convent, for example, may well keep up a state of recollection during his journey, and when he knows the liturgical prayers by heart, he can usually say them on the way. But after all, the proper remedy is to rise a little earlier, so as to make his preparation either in the sacristy or even on a *prie-Dieu* in the convent chapel,[1] which the nuns will very willingly provide if asked. And in this case he need not limit himself to the liturgical "Preparation." Still more easily can he, if only he adverts to the necessity, come down for a late mass some little time before he has to vest. And for the ordinary parish masses he can do the same, if only he is sufficiently serious-minded to do it; and he will be well rewarded in the additional fervour which he will bring to his mass.

Nor should we omit an allusion to the negative preparation, which consists in avoiding all kinds of distraction before mass. To refrain from reading one's letters, even before a very late mass, is a practice the very definiteness of which makes it easy to perform. In similar way every kind of arrangement for the work of the day, or any unnecessary speaking or intercourse with others should be strictly avoided.

With respect to thanksgiving after mass, there is less to be said, as the temptation to omit or curtail it is less. It is regularly looked for and expected wherever the priest goes. The importance of a good thanksgiving, to

[1] The alternative answer, often given, that the priest can make his preparation and thanksgiving in his own room can hardly be taken seriously. It is possible that there are some few priests who do this; but the ordinary rule is that if the preparation and thanksgiving are not made in the church, they are either not made at all, or at least curtailed to very small dimensions.

gather up the fruit of the mass, can hardly be over-estimated. Hence when a priest has to take Communion to the sick—which he so often does after mass—it does not seem much to ask that he should allow at least a few minutes to pass for his direct thanksgiving : after which he can well continue and complete it as he carries his Lord through the streets to the house of the sick man. It is not too much to say that his fervour as a priest will be the reflection of that of his daily mass, and the manner in which he says mass will depend on his preparation and thanksgiving.

With respect to the intention for which mass is offered, in a populous mission that almost settles itself, as our parishioners have the first right to our masses, within reasonable limits. But a priest would do well to keep a certain number at his own disposal, in order to foster the spirit of his piety. And every priest should from time to time say mass for his people. This is now laid as an obligation on those rectors of missions who have by recent legislation become *parochi*, on all Sundays and holidays, including the suppressed feasts. For others it is still a matter of option ; yet one would think that a priest's own interest in his work would suggest to him the propriety of doing so at least occasionally. It sounds strange to hear many priests regret the obligation and refuse to comply with it unless it can be shown to be absolutely binding. It would have appeared that if a priest has a proper spirit of zeal, the one end of his life would be the sanctification of his people, or those among whom he works. They have few enough prayers offered for them : one would have thought that an occasional mass would have been freely offered by the priest as a privilege. Unfortunately the question of income comes in, and many a priest hesitates between the two motives. Yet even in the masses which his parishioners ask him to say, some have to be without a

stipendium, and this ought to be so, to prevent the danger of the mercenary spirit over-running his better instincts.

It remains to say something on the manner of saying mass. There is no necessity to labour the fact that the rubrics ought to be faithfully observed, for they are commonly considered to bind under sin. Yet consistently with observing them it is possible to be either unduly long or unduly short. Both are objectionable from different points of view. A priest who takes from half an hour to forty minutes will prevent many who could otherwise attend from hearing mass; while one who gets through in a quarter of an hour will give no small scandal. The rule sometimes given of thirty minutes "from amice to amice" means about twenty-five minutes at the altar, and it is a reasonable allowance. But, after all, the actual time consumed is of less importance than the manner of celebrating. Some people have a rapid utterance; others are quick in their movements; others again save much time by not dawdling, but proceeding from one act direct to the next. Others, however, are by nature slow, and inclined to be hesitating in their action. Due allowance must be made for difference of temperament in this regard, so that no strict limit can be laid down. Even the well-known rule of St. Alphonsus that a priest must occupy at least a quarter of an hour is not always a safe minimum; for it must be remembered that on different days masses vary considerably in length. A short ferial mass without *Gloria* or *Credo*, especially if there is no *Imperata* prayer, or a *Missa Quotidiana* for the Dead, omitting the *Dies Iræ*, are instances of very short masses which might take less than twenty minutes. The really important thing is that mass should be offered by the priest with dignity and recollection, as though conscious of the greatness of the act, a spirit

which will show itself in every movement and gesture, and help the devotion both of him who celebrates and those who assist.

A word ought to be added about reading the Latin audibly. The late Pope tried to reintroduce the practice of the faithful following the liturgical prayers, etc. Undoubtedly this is a good method of hearing mass, though it had fallen largely into disuse. It can hardly be said that the Pope's wishes have led to any substantial result, and the reason is not far to seek. For the tradition of saying mass in an audible tone, such that even those near can follow, has almost entirely died out. In the vast majority of instances, the priest reads the Latin rapidly, and in a tone of voice that effectually precludes anyone hearing him. It seems sometimes as though his special object was to prevent anyone from following. Now there are other ways of hearing mass which do not need attending to the words, such as saying the Rosary, reciting Office, or private prayers, or using the prayers in the *Garden of the Soul* or other book. The first of these methods has been especially approved by being actually commanded by ecclesiastical authority for the month of October in every year. Nevertheless, it is not too much to say that those who prefer what many people consider to be the highest way of assisting at mass, have a right to do so, and it is the priest's duty to enable himself by practice to read the Latin in a tone which can be heard at least by those around him. We say deliberately " by practice," for the power to read Latin audibly and intelligibly is not so easy as many people seem to think, and requires considerable trouble to acquire.

The above of course only applies to a congregational mass : those who celebrate privately at a side altar will naturally speak in a low tone of voice, so as not to disturb their neighbours. Even they, however, should be

practised in reading Latin, so as to read it intelligibly to themselves, for the liturgical prayers should be a great aid to their own devotion. The old habit of saying a black mass on every free day is now almost obsolete; and it has been replaced by the various concessions of Pope Pius X with respect to certain days, on which we may either say mass *de Tempore* or *de Sanctis;* and occasionally, as in a vigil in Advent, three different masses are possible. All this helps to the appreciation of the liturgy, and should be used by the priest for that purpose.

Mental Prayer

It is admitted by all that a priest must be supereminently a man of prayer, and that the most important form of prayer, both in obtaining what we ask for and in its reaction upon ourselves, is Mental Prayer: yet, strange to say, of all the priest's duties, that of Mental Prayer is the one which is unfortunately too often put in a secondary place, or even neglected altogether. The name usually given to it—Meditation—is unattractive and misleading. It seems to put before one the idea of day-dreaming, and it is possible that all the practice of several years at least in the Seminary has not fully dispelled this idea. In point of fact, the Meditation is only one part, and that by no means the most important, of systematic Mental Prayer. It is a means to an end. Mental Prayer may be defined simply as prayer without a set form of words, and the Meditation is that which is usually—though not always—necessary to set the mind and heart in motion; but the end to be obtained consists of the aspirations of the heart and the acts of the will. It is these which make St. Alphonsus say that it cannot co-exist with sin;[1] and to promise

[1] *Preparation for Death*, Father Coffin's Edition, p. xv.

that anyone who practises Mental Prayer for half an hour daily will certainly save his soul.

It is to be hoped that now the Church has laid it down definitely as part of a priest's daily duty, greater strictness may be observed by our clergy in practising it with regularity. Yet there are undoubted practical difficulties in the actual circumstances in which we are placed. The ideal practice is undoubtedly to make half an hour's Mental Prayer before saying mass; but in many instances, especially in the case of the junior clergy, this is hardly possible. For they frequently have to say mass either very early or very late, or sometimes one, sometimes the other; or to go out to say mass at a convent or other centre some distance away, at a comparatively early hour.

The difficulty is thus the same, only in a more acute form, as that which has been mentioned in connection with a proper preparation for mass. For if it is difficult to find time for a preparation of five or ten minutes, a priest is not likely to find the longer time necessary for a proper Meditation. If he has to celebrate early at a convent, his mass will be followed by breakfast, after which he will return to the Presbytery somewhere about eight o'clock. He may then have letters to read, and in any case will consume half an hour or more over the daily paper, accompanied with his morning cigarette. Often he cannot spare the time after that, as he may have to be in the school at nine. But even if he can, he is not well circumstanced for a Meditation: the distractions of the day are on him, and he is in the midst of his work. The conclusion forces itself upon us that the morning Meditation, whether before or after mass, should be made at least before breakfast, or it will not be made at all; and whereas the rector is usually in a position to do so without inconvenience, this is not always the case; and whereas a curate can easily do it if he really

wishes on days when he says a late mass, it is not always easy when he says an early one.

Undoubtedly the duty will not be complied with without serious effort, and the first stage is a realisation of its practicability as well as its necessity. Some priests meet the case by uniting their mental prayer with their thanksgiving after mass. This is always better than nothing ; and if a priest has the courage to prolong the exercise to twenty or twenty-five minutes, and can guard against interruption from having to take Communion to the sick or other causes, it may be a complete solution of the difficulty.

But should the obstacles in the morning prove too great, so that practically the exercise is frequently curtailed or elbowed out, it may be better to capitulate to circumstances and set apart a time in the evening, when it will be done less effectively, and perhaps less regularly, as a priest is sometimes out at that time ; but it can usually be done. The Canon Law lays down no definite duration for the exercise ; and though the traditional half-hour assigned by custom ought not to prove too long, it is better to occupy half that time or even less, than to omit the exercise altogether.

Granted now that twenty minutes or half an hour is to be spent in Mental Prayer, the next question is how to spend it. And here the present writer wishes thoroughly to endorse the view put forward by Canon Keatinge that it should be spent in the church and nowhere else. The whole passage is worth quoting :—[1]

" Let me plead for the habit of using the church as our pious lay folk do. The church is not merely the priest's workshop, where he gives the sacraments and preaches to others. It is his own home, his sanctuary, and he is

[1] *The Priest*, etc., p. 26.

the appointed guardian of this dwelling-place of God with men. Here at least his surroundings will help his prayer, not mar it, and the sacramental presence of his God will tend to warm his heart and to lift his first thoughts above the teasing distractions of his daily life."

The alternative of trying to make our Meditation in our room is to surround ourselves with difficulties and distractions of every kind, connected with our daily work. If it be argued that the Jesuits themselves always make their exercises in their rooms, the answer is simply that this is part of a complete and thoroughly worked out system of life, and it is no disrespect to them to say that to adopt one detail when we do not aim at adopting the whole will not lead to a good result.

A minor reason for urging the use of the church is that it gives great edification to the lay folk coming to mass to find the priest always there first at his prayers, while it puzzles them to find the church empty till the very hour for mass. And if it be urged that the early comers will invade the priest's time and seeing him there, will utilise the spare minutes to go to Confession or the like, the answer is that only the most inconsiderate of his parishioners would think of troubling him at such a time unless there is good reason—that they live at a distance or cannot come at another time ; and in the few instances in which it may occur, the charity of his sacrifice will make up for the interruption of his exercise.

We may also plead the high authority of St. Alphonsus,[1] that the church is the best place for meditation, and although he goes on to say that those who cannot go to the church may " give themselves to prayer in any place, at home, in the country, even when walking, even when at their work," he is not speaking primarily of

[1] *Preparation for Death*, Father Coffin's Translation, p. xv.

priests, who nearly always have the opportunity of using the church if they want to ; nevertheless he describes a practice which may often be useful to a hard-worked priest, whether his morning meditation has been omitted or not.

Coming now to the method of Meditation, we find some features common to all methods. All are agreed that a short preparation should be made overnight, and the subject matter of the coming exercise be briefly reviewed, and that from that time until the Meditation is made, some sort of recollection should be observed, corresponding to the " Magnum Silentium " prescribed in the Seminary. All are agreed also that when the time comes, a short preparatory prayer should be made for light and help ; and at the conclusion an act of thanksgiving. For the body of the prayer it is usual to speak of two great systems—the Jesuit and the Sulpician—but of these two the Jesuit method is far the more widespread.[1] Indeed, the general use of that method is one of the greatest proofs of the large influence exerted by the Society in the Church. It is in many ways specially suited to the restless age in which we live, for it excites and guides our activity throughout : there is no period of rest. It is so well known that there is no need to describe it in detail. At first sight, to a beginner, it appears complicated enough. We are told to begin with a prayer for light, and two preludes, one being a " Composition of Place," the other a petition for certain definite grace. Then comes the body of the subject, divided into three points ; to each point is assigned a Consideration and an Application ; and, finally, at the end a Colloquy, and an examination of how the Meditation has been made. Then as an alternative, we are given a

[1] An excellent explanation of the Jesuit and the Sulpician systems can be found in Father Faber's *Growth in Holiness*, chapter xv.

method of Contemplation—to examine the Persons, Actions, Words—or Application of the Senses—touch, sight, sound, etc. All this to a beginner presents the idea of hopeless complication; Father Faber likens it to the cleric's first initiation into the Breviary with its apparent hopeless ramifications; but in practice the parts fit so well together and follow so naturally one on the other that after a short time the idea of complication to a great extent disappears.

The Sulpician method is in entire contrast to the above. The subject matter is not divided into points, but viewed as a whole; but the prayer itself is divided into three parts, of almost equal duration with each other. They are Adoration, Communion, Co-operation; said to correspond to the three petitions of the Lord's Prayer, Hallowed be Thy Name; Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done.

In truth, however, there are as many methods of mental prayer as there are teachers thereof, for so much depends on the personality of the person who practises it. It seems almost presumptuous to speak of practising it without a method, and it opens the door to the danger of "kneeling vacantly and doing nothing, which adds the fault of irreverence to that of idleness."[1]—a danger almost indicated by the very name Meditation. Still, on the high authority of St. Alphonsus, we venture to put forward a plan which is so natural as hardly to be called a method at all, and which emphasises the quality of spontaneity in our intercourse with God which should be one of the great fruits of Mental Prayer. Let him speak for himself: the following quotations give the essence of his direction:—[2]

"For meditation, it is best . . . to use some book;

[1] *Growth, etc.*, p. 270.

[2] *Preparation for Death*, Father Coffin's Translation, p. xvi.

pausing when the mind finds itself most affected. St. Francis of Sales says that in this we must do as the bees, who will settle on a flower until they have drawn out its honey, and then pass on to another. . . .

" Here we must observe that the spiritual profit derived from Mental Prayer does not consist so much in meditation as in making affections, petitions and resolutions : these are the fruits of meditation. And so after reflecting on some eternal maxim, and after God has spoken to the heart, we ought ourselves to speak to God with the heart, by making affections, or by acts of faith, of thanksgiving, of adoration, humility, and—most of all—of love and of contrition, which is also an act of love. For love is that golden band which unites the soul to God. . . .

" It is of great benefit to make petitions again and again, earnestly beseeching God with humility and confidence for His light ; for pardon of sins, perseverance, a good death, paradise, and, above all, the gift of His holy love. . . .

" It is necessary in prayer, at least at the end of it, to make some firm resolve, not only in general to avoid all deliberate sin however light, and to give ourselves entirely to God, but also in particular, as, for instance, to keep ourselves with greater care from some fault into which we have more frequently fallen ; or to practise some virtue in a better way than before. . . . We ought not to cease from prayer until we have made some definite resolution."

One special advantage of the above is that its simplicity makes it suitable for beginners in the art of Mental Prayer ; and in times of dryness, when devotion does not come easily, it may reduce itself ultimately to slowly reading a book. Such times are familiar to all of us, but they are especially discouraging to a beginner

who is without experience to cope with them. Especially a student at college, or even at school, may find help in this manner, and a practice which from its name sounds unattractive, and the explanation of which has sometimes appeared too complicated to be practicable, may in this way be reduced to a simple exercise within the reach of all.

The choice of a book is of course an important feature. To discuss this at length, however, would take us beyond our prescribed limits. There are good books in plenty, but nearly all of them are based on the Jesuit method, and difficult to use for such people as prefer some other system. Of late an inclination has been shown to go back to Bishop Challoner—a fact which bears eloquent testimony to the solid worth of his work written a century and a half ago. His meditations are indeed each in three points, but they allow more latitude of treatment than does a strictly Jesuit book.

But, after all, it is not necessary to have a set meditation book at all. Many find all they want in the *Imitation of Christ*. Others use the text of the Gospels—a practice which may be very fruitful to those who are sufficiently familiar with New Testament criticism, so as to be able to picture vividly in their own mind the surroundings of the scenes described. If these are sufficiently understood, then the words of our Lord, especially as given in St. John's Gospel, should provide the best possible matter for mental prayer.

Divine Office

The daily recitation of the Breviary is the one exercise of the priest which is not optional, but imposed by precept. The first result of this is that he is praying not in his own name, but in that of the Church. The most perfect way of satisfying the precept is to attend Office

in choir. At one time this was in a great measure possible; and indeed until the recent reform of the Breviary under Pope Pius X, it contained no reference to private recitation at all: it was assumed throughout that the Office was recited in choir.[1] At the present day, however, it is practically only monks who have the opportunity of doing so. Even on Sundays, the singing of Vespers has become rare in our churches, and when it does take place, there is usually no priest present except the Celebrant. The only alternative left to the secular priest is to recite the Office privately. But it is well for him to bear in mind that he is one of a large choir of reciters all over the world, who though separated physically, are united in spirit, singing the praises of God in the official words of the Church. It would seem that the least a priest can be expected to do is to select a proper time and place and suitable surroundings for so solemn a duty.

Yet there is perhaps no exercise in his daily life about which he is so lax in the manner of its performance. The obligation seems to weigh on him, and he acts as though time given to Office was time wasted, and therefore the great object aimed at was to fit it in when he can do so with the least interruption possible of his daily occupations. Who has not seen a priest saying Office in circumstances of time and place ill-befitting such a solemn act—as, for example, in a crowded railway carriage or tramcar, or while walking from place to place, or while waiting for an appointment, or for

[1] Thus, for example, the *Confiteor* in Prime and Compline were given in the form used in choir, with no reference to how it was to be said in private recitation. This has now been supplied. And so on in other instances. Even now the choir rubrics are often given without comment—as, for example, that which prescribes the *Preces* at Prime to be said in Lent, "flexis genibus," which of course does not refer to private recitation.

dinner? This method of treating it, to say the least, shows a want of appreciation of its solemn character, and the sanctifying effect of the duty is properly discharged. Yet these same people will show a minute scrupulosity about many of the small details of the Office which they conceive to bind under sin. It might surely be better if they devoted less care to the small details and more to the general spirit with which the Office is said. It is with a view to this general result that the following few suggestions are made.

The first way to show our respect for the Divine Office is to have a fixed time and place for the recitation of the different hours. Undoubtedly the best place is the church, and many priests contrive to say the greater part of their Office every day before the Blessed Sacrament. But this is not always possible, and a certain amount must almost necessarily be said in one's house or grounds. In such case, it is important to show our respect for the exercise outwardly, which will react within. Office may be said very devoutly walking about, or sitting down even in an arm-chair; but not lounging, still less lying on a sofa, which except in case of sickness would involve grave irreverence. And one ought to have one's priestly dress on: to say Office in hot weather with one's coat or collar off is quite irreverent.

Sometimes a priest has to say part of his Office away from home. In such case, the same principles apply. He should say it in surroundings suitable for such an exercise. One cannot say Office properly in a crowd, whether walking or in an omnibus or tramcar. If our compartment is fairly empty, and no regular conversation in progress, a railway carriage may be a suitable place: but if it is full of people it certainly is not; and if it occurs that this is the only opportunity we have of completing our obligation, it might in an extreme case be almost better to let the obligation go than fulfil it so

irreverently. Stories are told of a priest finishing his Office under a street lamp before midnight, when it might certainly have been better to omit it. A due respect for the Office urges us to say it with devotion or not at all. But in the majority of cases, the question of omitting it does not enter in: the alternative is not to omit it, but to have to say it at an inconvenient time after returning home. Surely such slight inconvenience should not be put in the balance against the need of reciting it "digne, attente ac devote."

With respect to the time of day, each priest must judge for himself how to accommodate it to his daily routine. The liturgical rules bind only *sub levi*, and therefore can be set aside for a reasonable cause, provided that the whole Office is finished by the hour of midnight. Nevertheless, a priest who wishes to show respect for his Office will set rubrics aside as rarely as possible. So far as he can, for example, he will aim at saying Prime in the morning and Vespers in the evening. He will not invert the order of the hours if he can help it; he will not break off at unauthorised points, even though the reason be theologically sufficient: he will rather anticipate any likelihood of interruption and avoid saying his Office at such times. A priest who looks on his Breviary as a convenient duty to put in at odds and ends of time, so that it shall not encroach on any valuable space of time, is laying himself out for possible interruptions and certainly not showing that respect for his Office which is necessary to make it a source of blessing to his life.

A word may be added about the privilege of anticipating Matins and Lauds the previous afternoon. It is usual to laystress on the advantage of this practice, and in the case of a priest on the English mission, the advantage is certainly great. For his daily routine is so uncertain, and so often interfered with by unforeseen

pressure of work that the occasions on which the Office has to be postponed till evening are numerous and continually occurring. On days of special stress it may and does often occur that when he finishes his work, perhaps late in the evening, he has not had time to open his Breviary all day. In such circumstances, he is little fit to begin *Aperi Domine* and recite the whole, and there is no chance of his doing so with much devotion. If, however, he has anticipated his Matins and Lauds, he can now say the other half of the Office—and the easier half—and postpone the pressure until the following day, when by giving an extra half-hour he can recover his lost ground.

On the score of convenience therefore, and of getting the exercise more reverently performed, the practice is to be strongly recommended. On the score of devotion, however, there is room for two feelings, which are largely a matter of temperament. To some the idea of being forward in one's duty is such a help that it outweighs everything else. To others, the changing the feast at midday to that of the morrow is perplexing, especially on days when there may be Benediction in the evening in honour of the former feast, which in his liturgical life has passed away. Then to many persons Compline is an attractive end of the day ; and though it is lawful to anticipate Matins and Lauds of to-morrow before saying Compline of to-day, and to reserve this till the last act before going to bed, it seems hardly the proper and reverent thing to do ; and it is more common for those who purpose anticipating to say Vespers and Compline any time after twelve, sometimes before a one o'clock dinner. Again, those who argue in favour of anticipating often lay stress on the fact that it is out of place to say *Jam lucis orto sidere* in the evening : but surely it is at least equally out of place to say *Te lucis ante terminum* at midday, or early in the afternoon.

Therefore if anyone is situated so as to have command over his time, by all means let us leave it to his own devotion to adjust his hours, and whether or not he will use the privilege of anticipating.

In England we have the privilege of substituting our Rosary for the Office on days when we are hard pressed for time. It might be well if we used this privilege more freely. For apart from all questions of time, the Rosary is far more easily said with devotion by a tired man than the Office, for it does not involve either reading or finding places. A devout Rosary will give greater glory to God than an indevout Office. The privilege is said to have been first obtained by Cardinal Wiseman, in view of the long Sunday Offices which in Lent and Advent were a difficulty to our hard-worked clergy. It was a source of disappointment to him that so few priests availed themselves of it. This is probably due in many cases to what are to a great extent scruples. The obligation to recite the Breviary is only a positive law, and binds according to the *mens legislatoris*. That mind can reasonably be interpreted by the reasons adduced by theologians as sufficient to justify non-compliance. The mere fact that a sick man who feels that he cannot say the whole Office is not bound to say any, lest he should be troubled with scruples, shows that any really serious discomfort is admitted as a sufficient cause for excusing from the rule.

It is well, however, to make an effort to avoid looking on the Office as a burden. If we find it so, we may be certain that there is something radically wrong in our performance of the duty. If properly recited, it should be one of the main supports of a priest's life. Cardinal Wiseman often declared that he had never once in all his life found it otherwise than an attractive duty. If well discharged, in proper surroundings, it may easily be made part of the liturgical life of the church within us,

and should help us not a little in keeping the various feasts of the year with devotion.

Visit to the Blessed Sacrament, Exmination of Conscience, Rosary

In most Presbyteries in which the church joins, it is customary for the clergy to pay an official visit to the Blessed Sacrament after dinner. This is in one sense not a good time, as one is perhaps less inclined for prayer at that moment than at any other during the day. Hence some have preferred to make their visit *before* dinner. The advantage of the more general plan is that it can be performed with regularity, and will not be elbowed out by pressure of work.

Such a visit fulfils any kind of quasi-obligation. At the same time there are reasons worth considering for not looking on so short an exercise as meeting what is aimed at. A priest's visit should surely be an event in his day—as it were a stocktaking of his daily work, when he puts his difficulties as well as his consolations with all confidence before his Lord, and while offering thanks for the latter, begs special grace for the former. This demands that he should not be hemmed in by considerations of time, and he would also wish to be alone at such a moment. It is a sort of complement to his examination of conscience, and should be an attractive exercise. Surely, then, if ever he wishes to pray spontaneously and without the restraint of words, a good visit will leave its impress on the whole day's work.

Then in the evening, as the last act of the day, comes the actual examination of conscience. As we so frequently urge when speaking on the Sacrament of Penance, the examination is only a means to an end. The end aimed at is sorrow for sin, and good resolve for the future. Now in the priest's case we are met with a

definite danger. Many priests do not say regular night prayers as the laity do ; for they consider that for them Compline is the best form of night prayer. But it does not contain any definite examination of conscience. The part which corresponds thereto—the *Confiteor*—seems the reflection of days when life was simpler, but it contains the most important part, the Act of Contrition. In these days a more systematic examination is called for and is now commanded. It would be well if this exercise were taken a little more seriously, and in this matter we might do worse than imitate a good Catholic living in the world.

The recitation of the Rosary does not call for much comment here. Freedom and facility in its use is one of the chief characteristics of modern Catholicity, whether of priest or layman. The fact that nearly all religious of both sexes wear a large Rosary prominently as part of their habit shows how completely the Church has adopted the devotion as part of her life. Many a layman—or laywoman—recites the third part—five mysteries—daily ; and there is surely nothing wonderful in a priest being asked to do the same.

CONFERENCE VII

THE PRIEST'S PASTORAL WORK

It has sometimes been a matter of comment that in the ordination of a priest the Church seems to act in a different manner from what she does in the consecration of a Bishop. In the latter case, a man has to wait till there is a vacancy and his work is required for the good of the Church : in the former case, he offers himself for ordination, and it is not until after he is ordained that a suitable vacancy is sought where he is asked to work. In some respects this follows inevitably from the nature of the case ; for a candidate for the Bishopric can go on working as a priest until his services are called for in the Episcopate. In some instances indeed that time never comes, and one who is apparently "Episcopabilis" never gets consecrated at all. In the case of a priest it is manifestly impossible to have candidates for Holy Orders waiting to be called to the ministry, and remaining laymen till that time comes. And indeed if it were otherwise possible, the length of time necessary to prepare for the priesthood necessitates the candidate being chosen some years before the need arises ; while, on the other hand, there are so many openings where a priest's work is called for that one can usually be found for a newly ordained priest without waiting, and indeed the tendency is rather for there to be such need that a man has to be ordained before his time.

Nevertheless, the comment does express a real truth.

Some men—in certain countries not an inconsiderable number—are ordained as what are often spoken of as "Mass priests," who having a sufficient competency of their own, have no intention of ever offering themselves for pastoral work of any kind. They wish to say Mass, and that is all. It is significant of the times that this is not to be so any longer. Although it is impossible to wait for a definite vacancy, the Bishops are directed in future not to ordain anyone unless they are satisfied that his services are necessary or useful to the Church, and an obligation is laid on every priest to accept any work from the Bishop which he is reasonably able to do.[1] There are to be no more "Mass priests." The movement was begun by Pius X in the city of Rome, when he only allowed those to live there who had definite employment: now the principle is extended, and has become part of the law of the Church. Hence pastoral work, in its broadest sense, has become an essential part of the vocation of a priest. It is proposed here to say a few words about the various offices of such work a priest ordinarily performs in this country. This naturally divides itself into two main categories, that which he does for the sake of his people as a whole, and that which he does for them individually. The former of these will form the subject of a later Conference: here we will consider the latter.[2]

The work of the Church is to sanctify the life of the Christian, and the priest's pastoral solicitude should extend to every individual of his parish. Many of them

[1] Canon 969: "Nemo ex saecularibus ordinetur qui judicio proprii Episcopi non sit necessarius vel utilis ecclesiis dioecesis." Canon 128: "Quoties et quamdiu id judicio proprii Ordinarii exigat Ecclesiae necessitas, et nisi legitimum impedimentum excuset, suscipiendum est clericis ac fideliter implendum munus quod ipsis fuerit ab Episcopo commissum."

[2] See also remarks on the Pastoral Office as a source of sanctification in Conference II.

he comes to know intimately, through the sacrament of Penance, and all of them are his friends as they are friends of Christ.[1] His work is to apply to them individually the graces of the Church, throughout their lives, and more especially at the chief epochs—to baptise them when they come into the world; to provide for their Catholic training at school; to prepare them for Confirmation when the opportunity arises; to administer their first Confession and Communion when they are of a suitable age; when they enter the state of matrimony to prepare them for the sacrament, and to assist at it when the parties are solemnly married; and, finally, to watch over their death bed, to anoint them and administer the holy Viaticum when the last summons comes. But in addition to these main epochs, the priest has to keep perennial watch over their lives, to assist them in their troubles, to advise them and absolve them when they have fallen into sin, continually to stimulate them in the practice of their holy religion; to warn those who neglect Mass on Sundays, or who stay away from Communion at Easter; and to help them in countless other ways. A few words about each of these duties will be in place.

We begin with the solemn rite of Baptism. Many priests find this the least spiritualising of all their works in the Church. The fact that the recipient of the sacrament is unconscious of what is being done, and often in consequence behaves in a manner not befitting the occasion, undoubtedly detracts from the solemnity of the rite. Yet there is much to suggest itself of special interest, for the sacrament involves the whole history of mankind. The child arrives not a member of the Church, even in positive enmity—though unconsciously—to Almighty God, and in the power of the enemy

[1] St. John xv. 14.

of mankind. As a result of the priest's ministration, the devil is expelled, and the child acquires the state of one of the faithful. The command "Exi ab eo, immunde spiritus, et da locum Spiritui Sancto Paraclito" should surely bring home to one the power of the priesthood. So also the words that follow a little later on :—

"Exorcizo te, immunde spiritus, in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, ut exeas et recedas ab hoc famulo Dei : ipse enim tibi imperat qui pedibus super mare ambulavit, et Petro mergenti dexteram porrexit.

"Ergo maledicte diabole, recognosce sententiam tuam, et da honorem Deo vivo et vero, da honorem Jesu Christo Filio ejus. et Spiritui Sancto, et recede ab hoc famulo Dei, quia istum sibi Deus et Dominus noster Jesus Christus ad suam sanctam gratiam et benedictionem fontemque Baptismatis vocare dignatus est. Et hoc signum sanctæ Crucis, quod nos fronti ejus damus, tu maledicte diabole, nunquam audeas violare."

So also the profession of faith of the god-parent on behalf of the child speaks of the Christian home into which it is its privilege to be born ; and this gives the full meaning to the Baptism itself. The sanctification of the child is completed by the two-fold anointing—by the Oil of Catechumens before Baptism, and by Chrism afterwards. It is the sign of a good Catholic tradition to wish for Baptism as early as possible so that the infant may be sanctified ; and the Catholic practice is to give him the name of a saint, under whose protection he is placed.[1]

[1] The modern practice of giving secular names is, it need hardly be pointed out, of Protestant origin. It is to be noted that in the new Codex of Canon Law it is definitely enacted that one name at least must be that of a saint (Canon 761).

The next epoch in the life of a child is his going to school, which by a strange satire comes always before he has, theologically speaking, "come to the use of reason." From henceforth the school teacher, as the deputy of the priest, shares with the parents the responsibility for the child's religious education. A good priest is frequently in his school, and gets to know the children each and all. Much of the religious instruction is best done by the ordinary teachers, but the priest will supervise it and often participate in it; and when it comes to preparing the children for their First Confession, he will probably keep it in his own hands. Nevertheless, he must bear in mind that although according to the new Codex the final responsibility as to the child's fitness rests with the priest (Canon 854, §5), his final decision requires the consent of the child's parent or guardian (*Ibid.*, § 4). This consent, however, is of course ordinarily assumed: with the large numbers at a modern school no other system would be possible. The children make their First Confessions in groups, on a date fixed by the priest. It is hardly necessary to remark that many a child in his first few Confessions experiences difficulty in finding matter to confess. Yet it is very important for such a one to form the habit of Confession in good time, so that when the need really arises by serious sin, the remedy may be ready to hand.

According to the modern practice, initiated by Pope Pius X, the First Communion follows immediately. In many cases the child only partly realises the sacredness of the act. Nevertheless, the surroundings, together with such knowledge as can be assimilated at that age, give plenty of scope for devotion; and with advancing years, the child realises more and more the privilege of receiving the Blessed Sacrament.

When the time comes for leaving school, a crisis is

reached, and it is sad to note how many boys and girls, but especially the former, are carried away by the brightness and interest of life when they go out into the world, and lose sight of their religion altogether. Needless to say, many of them fall into bad company, and their souls become in a state of grave peril. Various works have been set on foot at different times to retain our influence on our boys at this time of life—the institution of clubs, or boy scouts, or boys' brigades, or the like, with varying success. It is a time when the priest with all his solicitude is often powerless to do anything. On this we can quote the experience of Canon Oakeley writing half a century ago :—

"No complaint is more commonly heard among our clergy," he writes, "than that those who have been educated in our schools are lost to the Church by scores, if not by hundreds, as soon as the school time is over. This complaint I fear is but too well grounded, but I think that it suggests some important topics of self-examination to ourselves. Are we sufficiently careful to follow with our eye the children of both sexes who have ceased to come under daily observation by entering on the duties of their secular callings ? This enquiry applies most forcibly to the young men of our flocks, who for many reasons are less likely to come under the protection of watchful guides than young persons of the other sex, and who are at the same time exposed to a more dangerous class of temptations."

And he gives his own experience as to a possible remedy :—

"The interest which both sexes alike demand at our hands consists not merely in using means to preserve them in the practice of their formal religious duties, but in keeping up their attachment to the Church to which

they belong by engaging them in some practical form of connection with it, such as association with confraternities, or participation in offices or works of which it is the centre and spring. I have myself" (he adds) "witnessed in various ways and in more than one place the incalculable advantage of maintaining by some such definite and practical bond of union the tie between young persons, but especially young men, and their church. I have found that the privileges of the sanctuary or the choir have been prized as the most precious of distinctions, and that the Offices of the Church have proved successful rivals, not to say powerful antagonists, of the theatre or the music-hall. I have known young men who have been, to my undoubting belief, kept harmless amid the manifold temptations of the metropolis through influences directly received in, or by means of, the Catholic Church."[1]

In many cases where men have allowed their religion to lapse, the steadying influence required is happily supplied when the time comes for a man to marry and to devote himself to bringing up a Christian family. The wedding-day is a day of rejoicing; it is the priest's privilege to assist at the ceremony in church, and in many cases to join in the festivities afterwards. It is much to be regretted that the nuptial mass has almost died out with us—this being apparently in great part due to our Protestant surroundings; the two ostensible reasons being the custom of having the ceremony at a late hour, in order to enable people to come, and the wish for a short service so as not to overburden the non-Catholics present. It is the more to be regretted because it is such a beautiful service that if people were accustomed to seeing it, few Catholics would be content to omit it. However, taking the service as we find it,

[1] *The Priest on the Mission*, p. 87.

short though it is, it can be made very devotional[1] and joyful.

It has been said by some cynics that such joy is misplaced, and that if the young couple realised the anxieties and trials before them they would look on it as a day of sorrow rather than joy. Such remarks are surely out of keeping with the spirit of the followers of Him who assisted at the wedding feast in Cana, and worked His first miracle lest the rejoicings should be marred. In point of fact, marriage is a subject for joy as life is, with all its sufferings and anxieties, for it is the means of achieving a great and joyful work. If ever there is an occasion in life when people stand in need of the joyful sympathy of their friends, it is when they are beginning the main work of their lives. In later years, when storm and stress is on them, they will ever look back to their wedding-day for comfort and hope which will carry them through their trials. If God bless their union with children, the priest is at hand to minister to the mother in childbirth, to baptise the offspring, and to perform the solemn rite which is the mother's act of thanksgiving for successful childbirth.

Alas, however, many people lose sight of their religion after as before marriage, and their defection affects not only themselves, but their children. It destroys the character of the home, and is an injustice to those whom they have brought into the world. To them the solicitude of the priest will be continually applied. "I came not to call the just," said our Lord, "but sinners to penance";[2] and the priest's work in continually visiting his flock—house to house visiting, if circumstances

[1] In the case of "mixed marriages" some restrictions are necessary; and it is one of the sad drawbacks of our state in England that practically a large proportion of our marriages are "mixed."

[2] St. Luke v. 32.

permit—is chiefly directed towards rescuing those who have fallen away, or are in danger of doing so. The special efforts, the Lenten sermons and missions then or at other times, and the long hours spent in the Confessional are directed primarily towards getting back the sheep who have gone astray. No satisfaction of the priest can be compared with that when he brings back a lost sheep to the fold, and perhaps creates a holy home which but for his efforts would have been a home of perdition. If he has imitated the Curé d'Ars and done penance to himself in order to obtain such a conversion, the penance will appear to him small indeed compared with the blessings he has obtained.

The solicitude of a priest must not be limited to his own Catholic people. We have surely a mission to all, and we should try to reach all. "Other sheep I have," said our Lord, "that are not of the fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd."[1] One learns by experience how little we have personally to do with making converts. "The Spirit breatheth where He will," and a new convert will come from some unexpected quarter as though dropping down from the skies. It is often assumed that the chief school which produces converts is the High Church party of the Church of England. This may be so sometimes; but in the small experience of the present writer, both in the four years spent on the mission and in granting faculties as Bishop, this has not been universally the case. He can recall receiving Low Churchmen, Dissenters, Quakers, or unbaptised persons with no religion at all, as frequently as those of the High Church. They come at all ages; and often without any very definite apparent reason. It has no doubt been a case of corresponding with the grace of God, and even when it was originally set in

[1] St. John x. 16.

motion by something in one of our sermons, or when difficulties have been chased away in like manner, the priest feels clearly enough how little one has had personally to do with it, beyond being the representative of God. Nevertheless, it is one of the signs of God's blessing on our work, and if it is absent, and no converts are coming, we may well take it as a warning that we are not doing our work as well as we might.

This is not the place to write at length on the treatment of converts. Let it be sufficient to say that we should extend to these the very utmost charity and sympathy. We who were born Catholics can hardly realise the extraordinary mental anguish which some of them go through in their search after truth, and in confronting the call to break with the most sacred associations of their lives. Yet it is no charity to them to receive them when they are only partially instructed or when they have not really grasped the essentials of an act of faith. The modern discipline of requiring a faculty before receiving anyone into the Church is some check on this, but not a complete one. The judgment of the priest is practically always accepted and the instructions laid down are often curtailed.

When the convert has been prepared, the priest has to complete the work, and it is no small consolation both to him and to the convert. But after the seed is planted comes the time of growth, and the anxiety about the early Catholic life of his converts is not the least among the pastoral solicitudes of the priest. In their early days as Catholics they have a right to frequent visits from their father-in-God.

We come finally to a large number of subjects for the priest's visits—the sick of every kind, whether in hospitals or workhouses or infirmaries or in private houses, and from those who are stricken with comparatively light ailments to those who are chronic

invalids: and, lastly, those in danger of death. Of the sick in general Canon Keatinge at the outset calls attention to the essential difference between the sick men "letting the priest know" and "sending for the priest"; and he rightly points out that even when the former state is reached, there is a great opportunity for his soul, and the very protraction of his illness, wearying as it is to flesh and blood, may be—whether he recovers or not—the grace of his life. How many a man has been called back by illness to serious thoughts, and has made his peace with God, which may last for the rest of his life, perhaps for many years. "His illness," writes Canon Keatinge, "may be nothing less than a retreat for him and his whole house, if you happen to be a man full of the spirit of your vocation."[1]

When an actual sick call comes, there is of course no room for choice; one must go, and at once. The ministration to the dying is a part of the priest's office, which is sometimes viewed with some apprehension before ordination. The surroundings of death are unattractive to nature; the sight of the struggle for life which ends in defeat is painful to watch; and there is often trying physical discomfort in the surroundings of poverty and disease. Yet when it comes to the actual fact, any priest will confirm the statement that it is one of the most consoling duties of his office. The very fact that he is attending for purposes of ministration seems to carry him through all that nature revolts against in the sight and surroundings, while he gains for himself a valuable lesson on the frailty of human life and the nearness of eternity. It is indeed exceptional to be present at the actual moment of death, though this sometimes occurs. But one frequently sees the body very soon afterwards, with the familiar death expression on the countenance, before it has been laid out and assumed

[1] *The Priest, etc.*, p. 243.

the calm sleep-like appearance with which most people are familiar. The thought is inevitable : a few moments ago the soul was here ; we were speaking with him ; now he has seen Almighty God and been judged. May he always remember us who helped him to die as a Christian should !

We are often asked by the future priest for our experience of death-beds. The description of the final struggle between good and evil, the last assaults of the devil, who knows that with this soul it is now or never, are often depicted in vivid colours in books of devotion or in sermons, and this forms one of the features of death of which ordinary people are most afraid. It may be a good thing to have brought before them as a warning a picture of what presumably is a possibility ; but truth compels us to say that in the ordinary case it is not so. The late Dr. Coffin, Bishop of Southwark, who had had a long career as a member of the Congregation of Redemptorists, of which he was Provincial, once admitted frankly that although he had often preached it, he had never seen it ; and his experience of death-beds was very large. The ordinary rule is that in the later stages of illness all is calm, and the fear of death, even in cases where it has been prominent in life, disappears before the end comes. And—a fact which can never be too strongly enforced and which will be corroborated by any priest who has ministered to the dying—when the patient is told that death is imminent, in nearly every case the announcement is received with resignation ; and the last Sacraments give no small consolation. This has to be firmly insisted upon ; for ordinarily a non-Catholic doctor, who has not the same outlook on death that we have, will deprecate or even forbid informing him as to his condition. The priest has to resist this order, and he can do so with perfect confidence. The physical effect such as it is will be, as experience shows, all in the

direction of calming the mind and rather assisting than retarding recovery. And to us who believe in the efficacy of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, "even to restore health when God sees it to be expedient," this thought appeals with special force.

Are we to understand then that there are no bad deaths, or no death-bed conversions? Alas, many a death is evil and Godless, and many people refuse to see the priest at all. Even in such a case there is not necessarily a struggle, for a man may have surrendered himself to evil. There may, indeed, be cases of a struggle between the right and wrong at the end, but they are rare. But with respect to death-bed conversions, there is more to be said. The expression may be used in a broad or a narrow sense. In the strict meaning of the term, that a man after an evil life changes his disposition at the very end, this is of course the rarest event in the world, and if it occurs, must be looked upon as a very extraordinary grace. But many a person puts himself straight in his confession when in danger of death. Some ancient criminal attachment or some unconfessed sin may have kept him away from the sacraments for years without having destroyed either his faith or his general wish to serve God. To such a one his last sacraments form a great grace, which show that Almighty God has not been unmindful of his general aiming at good, and that whereas during life this aim has not been strong enough to overcome the special difficulty which came upon him, the stimulus of approaching death has been providentially afforded him to strengthen his will sufficiently for true sorrow.

But apart from death-bed struggles, the judgments of God are often manifestly shown by a sudden death. It has sometimes been remarked how many priests die suddenly; but to them surely sudden death should have no terrors. A man who has given his whole life and

strength to ministering for God should surely welcome a short and swift transit from this vale of tears to our home above. But in the case of those not so prepared, it is otherwise, and often the sudden death of one whom we have known and loved may come upon us as something truly solemn and awful. The following story of his early priestly days, even though more than thirty years ago, has never been forgotten or lost its effect on the present writer, and he makes no apology for reproducing it here ; though no doubt most priests might have similar experiences to recount.

A certain Mrs. X., a widow of about forty to fifty years old, who had been brought up in the Church of England, became convinced of the truth of the Catholic religion. She attended mass every Sunday, and was always at the evening service both Sunday and week-day—she never missed—and she had ceased entirely ever going to the Anglican Church. After a while she was asked whether she would not like to see the priest and be received into the Church. She answered that she would do so later on ; but she wished to wait till after the death of her aged mother, who was much opposed to Catholics, and who, she feared, might suppress her allowance and leave her nothing by will. Mrs. X. added that there was no danger in waiting : she lived next door to the priest, and in case of illness she could and would at once summon him. So matters remained until one day in the summer, when the school children had their annual outing, and the priest accompanied them. On his return, he found his housekeeper almost in a state of hysterics. Mrs. X. had been taken suddenly ill at midday, and had sent across to ask the priest to come ; but he was out with the children. About half an hour before his return Mrs. X. had died. The final scene of this remarkable story was the funeral service of Mrs. X. in an Anglican Church, at which her aged mother assisted.

Such are the facts, and without taking any too rigid a view of the final lot of Mrs. X. in the next world, we can at least see a punishment for her want of generosity in hesitating to give herself into God's hands as a Catholic until she should have (as she thought) made sure that she would not be the loser in this world's goods. At the lowest estimate, she was punished by being deprived of countless graces which she could have had. "God is not mocked . . . what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap."[1]

The pastoral work for the individual does not end with his death. First there are the funeral rites to perform. According to the new Canon Law, being a parochial function, it must take place in the parish church: the ordinary cemetery chapel, when there is one, will not suffice; still less the recital of the service in the open air, which is often the only function possible in the case of a public cemetery, and the parish priest or his deputy must perform the actual burial. This law is perhaps more important than it seems. The time of a funeral is one when the hearts of the mourners are open to influences to which at other times they are impervious; and frequently also there are non-Catholics among them. The beauty of the ceremonial cannot fail to be a real consolation to those who are bereaved, if only it is performed in a devotional manner; but a priest who is continually doing it day after day can hardly fail to go through it somewhat mechanically. The parish priest, on the other hand, or the curate, who has assisted at the death will himself share the emotion of the mourners. The custom prevalent in this country of adding some vernacular prayers when the ritual or official prayers are over helps very much at such a season, and not infrequently affects the non-Catholics present, for some of our funeral prayers are remarkably beautiful.

[1] Gal. vi. 7.

Then when the last rites are over, the priest will wish to commemorate his dead and to offer prayers for them. The time is unhappily over when the tombs of those who have departed were grouped round the church, to be remembered for many years by those who knew them. This practice was specially in accordance with the Church's spirit. Nowadays the growth of populations and the sanitary considerations have demanded the creation of large cemeteries outside the towns. All the more reason therefore that the clergy should continually call the attention of their parishioners to the Catholic doctrine of the Communion of Saints and to their duty to pray for those who have gone before them. This is one special feature of an Episcopal visitation, and the solemnity of the Bishop's act should serve to remind both pastor and people of the duty and consolation of offering prayers and masses for "those who have gone before us in the sign of faith, and sleep the sleep of peace."

CONFERENCE VIII

THE PRIEST'S PASTORAL WORK (*continued*)
THE LITURGY

ONE of the regrettable symptoms of present-day Catholicity in London is the decay of liturgy. It is true that we have in our midst now the great Cathedral of Westminster where the full liturgy of the Church is carried out daily with a completeness unknown in modern times; but it seems as though its existence has become a sort of centre of specialisation in that line, while one after another the parish churches have put their Sunday high mass into a secondary place, or abolished it altogether.

This is a great change on past traditions. At the beginning of the last century, when the modifying of the Penal Laws first made it possible, a great effort was made to have high mass in all the churches of London—then about eight in number. The memories of Webbe at the Sardinian Chapel, and Novello at the Portuguese Chapel became part of Catholic London; and in later times, though the singing at the various churches was of a type which we should not now approve—notably at Warwick Street, which gained for itself the title of the Shilling Opera, for all the best singers of the Italian Opera were to be heard there on Sundays—nevertheless, this indicated much care and attention in the carrying out of the liturgy at high mass. Vespers were also common as an afternoon service on a Sunday, which was probably in great part due to the thousands of French

émigrés priests and laymen who were in London in the early years of the century; for in France the singing of vesper psalms has always been popular. Even in the country churches it was the rule, not the exception, to have a sung mass on Sundays. Here again one recalls a stamp of music with which we should not now be content—such as Mozart XII sung in unison, already alluded to in a former Conference—but it evidences considerable trouble to be able to have a sung mass.

We may well enquire what has caused the London tradition to change. One reason may possibly be that the increase of population has led to the people being more evenly distributed between the various masses, so that no single mass is the principal one in the sense that it used to be, and that seems expected in the liturgical rubrics. At present in many places the ten o'clock mass draws the largest congregation, and since the introduction of a twelve o'clock low mass, the high mass has been further depleted, so that the sermon is often put at the former instead of the latter.

Another reason may be the coming of the tradition from Ireland. There are no people on the face of the earth to equal the Irish in their devotion to low mass, or in the number of the mass-going population. Dublin may be compared with any city in Catholic Europe, and for the number of people who go to mass on a Sunday—and even on a weekday—could put that city in the shade. But since the suppression of the liturgy by the Penal Laws, the Irish have never recovered their taste for high mass or other functions. Even at the Pro-Cathedral in Marlborough Street, Dublin, though the singing is excellent, the people do not take to high mass: they prefer to hear a low mass which may be going on at a side altar at the same time, and at its conclusion the church empties, though the high mass is not half over. Here in England we have not got the Irish devotion to

motives sometimes disguise the odious features of avarice, and an ambition to accomplish some deed of benevolence or some act of religion may fetter a man to the service of Mammon. Hence Christ says: "Take care to keep yourselves far from every kind of covetousness." There is nothing more wicked—*nihil est scelestius*. It is a mercenary spirit. It is the service of idols. It is a snare of the spirit of evil, *laqueus diaboli*. It makes a man hard, sordid, and ungracious to the poor. It teaches him to view every function and appointment, even the flock itself, from a purely pecuniary standpoint. It makes him a keen negotiator in prayers, Masses, and Sacraments. It closes his mouth on the precept of almsgiving. It closes his heart to every generous instinct. In a word, no matter how upright and exemplary a priest may be, avarice makes him hateful to God and to the people, and destroys all confidence in his life and teaching.[1] Therefore, do thou, O man of God, shun these things, "on no account directly or indirectly ask anything when administering the Divine Mysteries,"[2] retrench your wants, be content with few things, and lay up for yourselves a treasure in Heaven that will never fail. Had the Apostles raised ten thousand dead to life, and been wanting in contempt for the riches and glory of this world, far from converting souls they would have been treated as impostors.[3] And if the laity see that a priest is trying to serve

[1] "And when the people see a priest more zealous for money than for souls they will close their hearts to his most passionate pleadings."—Archbishop Ullathorne, *Ecclesiastical Discourses*.

[2] St. Chrysostom.

[3] Ritual. *Non quaero quae vestra sunt sed vos.*—2 Cor. xii.

God and gold, feeding the flock for filthy lucre's sake, "they will begin by feeling disrespect and disgust for him, then indifference for his ministry, and then less and less love for the faith which he professes." [1]

Rules of business

One of the apostolic canons points out that a Bishop, though chiefly concerned with the precious souls of men, is also bound to superintend the temporal affairs of a diocese. Hence, as guardian of all diocesan property it is his duty to see that, in all places subject to his jurisdiction, ecclesiastical goods are administered with caution and care. He should get rectors and all who have charge of Church property to render each year a full and exact account of their administration, a summary of which, having been notified to the people, should be deposited in the archives. "Let Missionary Rectors," says the Third Synod of Baltimore,[2] "keep an account book, in which receipts and expenses, rights and obligations . . . titles, mortgages and debts, etc., are clearly and accurately posted in their proper places." With such an account book, carefully kept, it will be easy for Bishop, rector, or auditor to compile, when necessary, a statement of the financial position of a parish, and thus to ascertain all a priest has received in the way of offerings, intentions, alms for the poor, contributions for the Church or for some special purpose, as well as all that he has disbursed to teachers, merchants, tradesmen, and others. Many clergymen make use, moreover, of a small memorandum book, with de-

[1] Moriarty, *Allocutions*, p. 62.
[2] N. 275. See also Synod of Maynooth (1900), n. 339.

of the *Gloria* and *Credo*, in which the *Amen* is often repeated many times; in the beginning of the *Gloria* also, or in the *Sanctus* or elsewhere some repetition is found; but as a general rule in the masses we have had in this country the repetitions have been less pronounced than is often implied, and a good many masses are practically free from them. The abuse current in Italy of having all the chief parts of the *Gloria*—the *Gratias agimus*, the *Domine Deus*, etc.—as separate pieces which is condemned by the Pope has never found its way into England.[1]

Then with respect to details, although the ideal put forward is for a choir of men and boys, it was apparently not intended to exclude women altogether: it was only meant to stipulate that they should not be "admitted to the choir," which according to the authorised explanation, is complied with provided that they are grouped apart and not mixed with the men. Indeed, solos are expressly allowed, provided that they do not monopolise the singing. The chief instrument is to be the organ or harmonium, but with leave of the Bishop other wind instruments may be added on special occasions. The only prohibition is against *instrumenta percussionis*, specified as pianoforte, drums, kettle-drums, cymbals, triangles, etc.—a list which is in itself a sufficient commentary on the music which it is desired to exclude.

All this seems surely broad enough to bring the sung mass within the capability of most missions. Nevertheless, there is much in favour of a return to plain chant. The old idea which was involved in Bishop Douglass's description of a Requiem a century ago that "the Responses were in plain chant except the *Libera*, which

[1] That is, not as a rule. In the days of the so-called "shilling opera" at Warwick Street, some of the Italian type of masses were in vogue.

was in music," calls for combating, for Gregorian Chant is in the highest sense music. The chief reason that people do not always take to it is that it requires a certain training to appreciate it. If plain chant is to be restored, the first step is to train not only the clergy, as is already being done, but more importantly still, the schoolmasters. Recently the writer heard a high mass in a country church sung in plain chant by the school children, who had been trained by their master, and not only was the effect most devotional, but the congregation was already beginning to join in the singing—a consummation devoutly to be wished. If this could be done regularly, we should perhaps see our way to the restoration of the liturgy in popular estimation, and an incidental advantage not to be lost sight of would be that it would limit the duration of the services.[1]

The case of Vespers is different from that of sung mass. It was never meant for an evening service of the modern type, and used to be sung early in the afternoon. From the time when vernacular evening services began to come in—which was about the middle of last century[2]—the

[1] As an extreme example of the opposite spirit and the decay of liturgical sense may be quoted that of a church a few years ago on Palm Sunday, which fell that year on March 16, the only music being at the distribution of the Palms, when the people sang the hymn " Glorious St. Patrick." On another occasion at quite a large church, one Maundy Thursday, falling that year a few days after March 19, and within the supposed Octave of St. Joseph, when we came hopint go find *Tenebræ*, instead there were popular devotions before the statue of St. Joseph, which in consequence of Passiontide, was covered with a purple veil, but had lights burning before it.

[2] About half a century earlier a system of English psalm-singing was introduced by some of the gentry in their chapels. Owing to the nature of its origin—for it was at a time when the laity were in opposition to their Bishops and adopted the name " Cisalpines "—these English psalms did not at that time receive Episcopal sanction ; but they were not forbidden, and were in

popularity of Vespers has steadily declined. There are now but few churches where they are ever attempted; and such services as *Tenebræ* in Holy Week or the *Dirge* on All Souls' Day seem to be almost limited to cathedral churches. This is of course to be regretted, and it is probable that a good deal more might be done to revive the singing of Vespers; but it may be doubted whether it would be really popular in England as a regular thing.[1]

Now a priest should love the liturgy, both for his own spiritual life and for that of his people; and likewise for the outward glory of God, for it is the official life of the Church. The Puseyites boasted to Cardinal Wiseman

use in some chapels down to comparatively modern times. In the home of Cardinal Vaughan at Courtfield, in Herefordshire, they were in regular use. In his youth he learnt to love them, and when Bishop of Salford he introduced something similar in his Cathedral, with considerable success; and the experiment was copied elsewhere. When he came to London as Archbishop, he tried to introduce them there; but they were not taken up, and are now rarely heard anywhere. Nevertheless, the "Come let us adore"—an adaptation of the *Venite exultemus*—found its way into the Manual of Prayers and has thus secured a permanent place among our devotional exercises.

[1] The practice in some few churches of having votive Vespers of our Lady every Sunday has little to recommend it. They are in truth private devotions, and ought to be sung as such, without any liturgical accessories. If there is, as often, a celebrant in cope, either he will be vested in a colour incongruous to the season—as, for example, a white cope in Lent or Advent, or even on a green Sunday—or, what is worse, he will be celebrating the office of our Lady in green, red or purple, which is still more incongruous. Moreover, since the reform of the Calendar under Pius X, the proper liturgical psalms at Vespers are nearly always the same, which removes the difficulty which used to drive people to votive Vespers of our Lady, in days when the liturgical Vespers were so various and complicated.

that great credit was due to them for reintroducing high mass (as they considered it). The Cardinal replied that still greater credit was due to Catholics who had never lost it. A priest should be educated in the liturgical sense that he in turn may educate his people. If he has little taste for liturgy he is wanting in the fulness of his vocation. It is certainly not an over-statement that much more trouble might be taken with the liturgical services than is often the case. To learn to be at home on the sanctuary and to move about quietly and in a dignified way requires a little effort, but presents no great difficulty. Yet often we see it far otherwise. So, also, every priest should be able at least to chant the prayers in a proper tone, and this will make a great difference to the general effect. If he is musical, so much the better. Many priests are not, and for them it involves a good deal of trouble and will be only moderately successful ; but it is hard to believe that the prayers we sometimes hear represent really the best that the priest can do. An unmusical priest may be excused for finding the Preface and *Pater Noster* a difficulty, but it should not be insuperable.

Although, however, a high mass, or at least *Missa Cantata*, may be regarded as the ideal even for small missions, there are undoubtedly many in which this is impossible. In such cases the chief Sunday low mass can be and often is performed with solemnity—such as the lighting of the " sixes " on the altar, and the number of servers increased—which may be very devotional. And it may be accompanied by singing, provided this is in Latin.[1] And in large churches, all the Sunday masses should be celebrated as solemnly as possible. Let it be remembered that many persons always hear

[1] So the *Motu Proprio* of Pius X provides. In the case of children's masses the singing of English hymns seems to be sanctioned by custom.

one of the low masses only. For this reason it is desirable that at least the more essential notices—announcing coming feasts, or fast days, or special services—should be read at every mass, as well as the Epistle and Gospel of the Sunday. Where possible, even a short five minutes' sermon serves a very good purpose. The whole service can be made devotional, and the large Communion makes itself necessarily so. The well-known description of Father Dalgairns, in his book on Holy Communion, is worth quoting as illustrating this fact :—

"Enter into a London chapel on a Sunday when not even the few attempts at magnificence which our poverty permits us are displayed. Let it be in the depths of the City, in an old-fashioned chapel, with Protestant pews. Here the church has no beauty that one should desire her. No organ peals, and no sweet-toned choir chants. Yet there is a marvel which kings and prophets thirsted to see and did not see. They throng to the altar ; the priest in a low voice repeats the blessed words and gives to each his God. No saints are there, but good ordinary Christians, fearing God in the midst of the world ; some are even great sinners who have just been cleansed in the sacrament of Penance. The same scene goes on all over even this heretical land. No glorious bells ring out over the length and breadth of England, from spire and steeple, to announce the adorable sacrifice, but in our great wicked towns you may count the communicants by tens of thousands. In Birmingham and Sheffield, Liverpool and Manchester, they are crowding to receive their Lord. The same blessed work is going on in lowly country missions scattered up and down the country, where a few worshippers still congregate to worship the God of their fathers, in venerable chapels under the roof of Catholic gentlemen, the

descendants of martyrs, where the Blessed Sacrament has found a refuge through centuries of persecution."[1]

But the priest will have to conduct many services which are only partly liturgical, or not liturgical at all. Of such a nature is the ordinary Sunday evening service at most of our churches, or the weekday Benedictions, meetings of Confraternities, etc. Here again there is room for improvement in the manner they are conducted. Many a priest "gabbles" the prayers—especially the Hail Marys of the Rosary—in a manner which makes them quite inaudible, and is a real hindrance to the people joining. It conveys the idea that he is discharging a duty for the sake of his people, without any idea of praying himself. Yet surely the prayers which are good enough for them are good enough for him; and in truth there is no more moving or devotional sight than that of a priest praying together with his people. The practice of utilising the time during Benediction to say Office is regrettable if only for this reason —that it destroys the community of prayer between priest and people, and he loses the grace of the Congregational Act. At the Eucharistic Congress in 1908, when the people assembled at each side of the street in their thousands, one of the most touching sights was the arrival of groups or congregations led by their priests, reciting the Rosary or other devotions or singing hymns with him. No more vivid representation could be imagined of the good shepherd leading his flock, as is customary in southern or mountainous countries, which formed one of the best known of the parables of our Lord.

There is certainly a need for more variety in our popular evening services: people get tired of the perpetual Rosary, sermon and Benediction; but until

[1] P. 403. (Ed. Duffy. 1903.)

something better is forthcoming, we must make the best of what we have. Evening services are comparatively new in other countries besides England, as formerly there was no satisfactory means of lighting the churches, and there is now room for their development. In some smaller churches Night Prayers are an agreeable variety: the Curé of Ars used to say them with his people every evening. There is something to be said also for the old English devotion of the Jesus Psalter; and in Lent, Stations of the Cross are usually popular. But on the whole, there is a want of suitable variety in the first part of the service. For the concluding part, nothing could be more beautiful than the Benediction service, which has crystallised itself into a definite form for this country.

Finally, it is worth while to put in a word in favour of an effort to keep the church open all day. The importance of this practice has been emphasised not only in our own Synods of Westminster,[1] but also in the new Codex,[2] which orders it for at least several hours each day. With us there are sometimes difficulties in the way, especially when the presbytery is at a distance from the church. Sometimes, however, these difficulties are unduly magnified. Even the danger of occasionally losing a few shillings from the collection boxes would seem to be not too great a price for satisfying the devotion of so many who long to visit the Blessed Sacrament from

[1] "Ad hanc devotionem magis magisque fovendam, vehementer optandum est ut Ecclesiae aditus vel continuo diu, vel si ruri sit, per aliquot horarum spatium fidelibus pateat; et doceantur omnes amantissimum Salvatorem in Ss. Eucharistia latentem invisere, adorare, ac fervidis precibus supplicare, animamque simul communione spirituali refocillare" (*I Westmonast.* xviii. 9).

[2] "Ecclesiae in quibus Sanctissima Eucharistia asservatur, praesertim paroechiales, quotidie per aliquot saltem horas fidelibus pateant" (Canon 1266).

time to time. A Catholic church should have as its characteristic that it is *alive ;* and even when no service is going on, the daily life of the church shows itself. Time was, and not so many years ago, when a church left open would run the risk of being maliciously desecrated : and that is probably in part at least responsible for the bad tradition in some of our churches in this respect ; but it is to be hoped that we have got past that danger by now.

CONFERENCE IX

THE PRIEST'S PASTORAL WORK (*continued*)
PREACHING

LET us begin this Conference by propounding a question for consideration. The preaching of the Word of God is a sacred part of the priest's pastoral work, and not the least sacred part of it. Yet the average priest speaks of it as though it were a task irksome in itself, to be got through somehow or other, and always a nuisance. If anyone is available and is kind enough to replace him in the pulpit, or if he gets off by the timely arrival of a Bishop's pastoral, he is unreservedly pleased. It is true that he is usually a hard-worked man, and that if he gets off *any* of his work, it is a relief to him ; but in the case of a sermon he is far more relieved than in any other case. Does this look as if he appreciated at its true value the pastoral work of preaching the Word of God ?

In order to get a true answer to this question, we shall probably not be far wrong in seeking it in the personal history of the individual priest as preacher, to see whether he has imperceptibly learnt an inadequate view of his office.

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that his early sermons were simply a struggle against breaking down. He was naturally nervous the first few times that he found himself in so novel a position, standing before a congregation all listening to his words. In order to nerve himself up for the occasion, he has taken no small

trouble in writing out in full his discourse and committing it to memory. His chief anxiety is lest his memory should fail him—which sooner or later it is sure to do, not once, but often, and he is anxious as to what will happen the first time that this shall occur. He gets through his first sermon, and is then anxious about his second, and so on. Very soon he finds that it is practically impossible for him to write out all his sermons, and he contents himself with an analysis ; for as time goes on, he is acquiring a certain facility in expressing himself *ex tempore*, and the frequency of his sermons is gradually curing him of nervousness. Perhaps the first time that he lost the thread of his discourse he covered his difficulty better than he might have hoped, and this helps to give him confidence. Then sooner or later it will occur that some unexpected pressure of work—a sick call on a Saturday night or a Sunday morning, let us say—prevents him from preparing his sermon at all in a systematic way, and he finds himself face to face with the duty of preaching with only a few minutes to collect his thoughts. With commendable trust in Providence, he says a fervent prayer for Divine assistance, boldly ascends the pulpit, and perhaps surprises himself at the facility with which he discharges his task. Would that he always bore in mind that if our Heavenly Father helps us in a special way when we have to speak for Him and His kingdom on the pressure of an emergency, this does not dispense us from using ordinary means on a future occasion when the emergency has passed away. It was for such occasions—when the Apostles were to be delivered up to the hands of their enemies—and for those occasions only that He told them to " take no thought of how or what to speak ; for it shall be given you in that hour what to speak."[1]

If we may venture to give a natural explanation, it

[1] St. Matt. x. 19.

would be that we all have a certain class of thoughts in our mind which, under the influence of sudden or strong stimulus, take shape in words. If we trust to these time after time, we shall, to say the least, lay ourselves open to great monotony and self-repetition in our preaching. And this is what often occurs as a young priest gradually gains confidence, and begins to think that he can preach without serious or long preparation.

The above description might be continued, but enough has been said for the present purpose, which is to call attention to this point. At the beginning the priest's preaching has been a struggle to get through without breaking down. When he has been sufficiently long at it for this danger to have passed away, he still has the practical feeling—his aim is to fill up the requisite amount of time with respectably good matter, so as to discharge his duty. It has hardly at all come before him in the light of a privilege to speak the Word of God, a source of grace to himself as well as to others, an expression of his own spiritual thoughts put forth for the benefit and instruction of those entrusted to his pastoral charge; and this is to a large extent responsible for the want of fervour and of soul and interest in his sermons.

It is always easier to state an evil than to suggest a remedy; but it is something towards the desired end if we are able to diagnose the true cause of our difficulty. The conclusion urged is that it is not enough to insist on an elaborate direct preparation; on a scientific knowledge of the way to order a discourse; on rules of elocution and rhetoric; highly desirable as some of these may be. Still less would one ask a priest to write and learn all his sermons, which even if practically possible, is not in any way desirable. The true remedy is rather to teach our young priests the spiritual side of preaching, to train them to look on the sermon as part of their

pastoral office. If this view is planted in their minds at the outset of their priestly career, it will grow rapidly and strongly, as by actual contact with their parishioners they *feel* their own power for good in the pulpit, and see before their eyes their people growing and living on the strength of words heard in their sermons. It is this consciousness which will elevate the duty in their minds from an irksome task to that of one of the most privileged of their pastoral duties.

In this point of view we see the key of the remark often made that the remote preparation for preaching is more important than the proximate. By the remote preparation is meant the priest's daily life, his union with God, his supernatural views of the things of this world, and the acquiring of his store of thoughts from his prayer, his meditation, his spiritual reading, and, not least important, his pastoral work among the poor, the sick and the dying. "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."[1] If the truths of faith are so vividly present to us that God's dealings with mankind are as things we have actually seen and heard, we shall long that others may share our privilege, and we shall feel the greatest joy in instructing them in Christ's Name. But if this spirit be wanting, all human eloquence will be of no avail. The value of the sermon is the reflection of the life of the preacher.

In considering the question of reading and study in preparation for the pulpit, we naturally turn first to the two-fold branches of Scripture and Dogma as that which will help chiefly to give substance and backbone to our sermons.

It is astonishing how little use many preachers make of the inspired Word of God, containing as it does in itself not only the essence of all religious history and dogma, but so many of the words of Christ Himself.

[1] Acts iv. 20.

Limiting our observations to the Gospels alone, it is an extraordinary grace we have received in having such full records of His words and acts at least during His public life. This in itself enables us to have a real personal knowledge and love of our Redeemer. We should expect our sermons to be full of His words and sayings, His parables, His illustrations, the example of His works; and that all our moral lessons should be illustrated and driven home by His words. Yet in practice we hear sermon after sermon with no more than a few texts from Scripture scattered through them, and these often isolated and without their context; and when we find a preacher really familiar with our Lord's life and words, we comment on it as quite remarkable.

It is probable that this is largely due to our habit of quoting isolated texts in support of dogmatic truths, and our very reverence for them as the inspired Word has led us to rest on the actual words and to lose sight of their general context. Very probably also Cardinal Manning's remark may be true, that since the sixteenth century there has been a tendency to over-strictness against the popular use of the Scriptures as a sort of recoil or reaction against Protestantism. At the present day, however, there is happily a reaction against this in all countries, and a movement in favour of circulating at least the New Testament more freely in the vernacular. With us we can date it from the issue of the sixpenny New Testament by Burns and Oates, and the Penny Gospels of the Catholic Truth Society; but the cheap Gospel texts in the vernacular which have appeared in some other countries—notably those issued by St. Luke's Society in Rome itself—have outdone anything we have in England.

One of our chief and foremost duties then is to familiarise ourselves with the words and actions of our Lord in English. There are many texts with which we are

familiar in Latin, but we seldom make use of them because of the labour of turning them into English in the middle of a sermon, when our mind is already intently occupied. Let us know them in English for the sake of our people whom we wish to instruct. As to how this is best done opinions may differ. Some recommend learning texts by heart so as to have them always at hand. Others would find this method too mechanical, and would prefer to trust to their own reading of and meditation on the Gospels to bring about the desired result. They would argue that he will have more command over texts that he has used and pondered over than over those he has simply learnt by heart.

It is wonderful how the simple quoting of Gospel words elevates our sermons. The people want the words of our Lord, His acts, His parables, the lessons He intended to teach ; they want to hear of the collateral setting of His life, the gradual development of His work, the kind of people He was teaching, and so forth. Then they should hear the teaching of St. Paul, his words to his converts, his warnings against abuses, his doctrinal and disciplinary instructions. Then also they like to hear from time to time some of the Old Testament—either the history of God's chosen people, or the beauties of the Messianic prophecies—of Isaias and others ; or the psalmody of David ; or the Sapiential books of Solomon ; or the works of Jeremias and the other prophets. Mere memory work will not do all this for us ; we must ourselves be accustomed to think of the Gospels, to meditate on our Lord's words, to see the meaning of His parables, and so forth. Here is prayer enough and work enough to last us a lifetime, and be continually bearing fruit.

Now we come to direct preparation of our sermon. Undoubtedly the only way at the beginning is to write it out, learn it and deliver it from memory. But this laborious process is only a means to an end. It will in

the first instance help the priest through his initial shyness and diffidence in speaking of God and holy things in public ; and it will lay the foundation for the methodical composition of a discourse. For he will soon learn the sequence of ideas which sound at first artificial, though eventually they become part of the instinct of the preacher—text, introduction, statement, development, explanation, illustration, peroration, etc. But it bears the same relation to preaching that the old autumn manœuvres did to war. His sermons in future will not be written out : in the present hard-worked state of our clergy, it would be impossible ; and in any case, it would be ineffective. A sermon written and repeated by heart *must* sound unreal and dead.[1] As Cardinal Manning puts it, " The written word is what we thought when we wrote it ; the spoken sermon is what we think at the moment of speaking. It is our present conviction of intellect and feeling of heart : it is therefore real, and felt to be real by those who hear it."[2]

It is not intended to discourage a careful preparation, so far as circumstances will permit ; quite the contrary. But it will not be of the nature of writing a set discourse. It will be a far more simple preparation. Cardinal Manning instances the preaching of the Apostles. " We cannot," he says, " conceive these messengers of God labouring to compose their speech, or studying the rules

[1] That is, an ordinary parish sermon. In the case of a sermon on some special occasion this remark must be modified. Such sermons partake of the nature of a pronouncement, and it is important that the language should be carefully weighed, and no point of importance omitted. They usually find their way into print, and are therefore addressed to a larger and different audience besides that in the church, and must be treated on a different footing.

[2] *Eternal Priesthood*, p. 187.

and graces of literary style. The records of their preaching in the New Testament are artless and simple as the growths of nature in the forest, which reveal the power and beauty of God. Their words and writings are majestic in their elevation and depth and pathos and unadorned beauty, like the breadth and simplicity of the sea and sky. Their whole being was pervaded by the divine facts and truths, the eternal realities of which they spoke."[1]

Let us fix our ideas by a definite instance. In all St. Paul's career there was no one sermon which would have needed greater care than his sermon at Athens. He had to speak to a highly educated audience, of people without belief even in God, most of them eaten up with pride, listening to him with a supercilious curiosity; and he knew that for most of them his sermon would be the one opportunity of their lifetime. If any sermon of his would have needed previous thought and preparation, it would have been this one. Of course we have no authority for saying how much preparation he gave to it. We can well imagine his carefully thinking over what he was going to say, thinking of his initial outburst about the Unknown God, carefully considering his line of argument about the Resurrection of our Lord, his reference to the Greek poet with whom both he and they were familiar, and so forth. But equally we most assuredly cannot for a moment imagine him writing out and learning his discourse. Had he done so, it would have lost all its force and reality. Any gain in the artificial rhetoric, or the choice of words, or the like would have been far more than compensated for by the hollowness and want of fervour *hic et nunc*. Other instances might be adduced and the same reasoning applied to them: St. Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, St. Stephen's speech to his murderers, and

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 179.

many others. From internal evidence we can see that these were thought out and prepared beforehand ; but we cannot even imagine their having been written out and committed to memory.

Our future preparation may perhaps be something of this kind. First we have to fix on our subject—not always the easiest part of our work. Let us suppose that on reading through the Sunday Gospel some aspect of it or some incident in it appeals to us from a particular point of view, and that point we decide to develop. Possibly something we have read in the past occurs to mind, and we get out a book—or perhaps several books —to suggest to us a few ideas. Then the first stage of our work is done.

The next process is to think. We have to make the ideas our own, and develop them according to the bent of our own minds. This cannot easily be done as we sit at our desks. Thoughts will not come to order. Developing a subject in one's mind is a gradual process, and takes time. It can well be done as we walk from place to place, or exercise any light employment. It is specially suitable to do it as we go about our pastoral work. The words we use in our visits to members of our flock are the reflection of our mind and will bear close resemblance to our words in the pulpit. If we find plenty to say, and are conscious of the consolation we give by saying it to the poor individually, why should it not be so likewise when we address them from the pulpit ?

In order to complete our preparation, we must then sit at our desk and write out the substance of our thoughts and put them in methodical order. We should also look up the texts of Scripture on which we rely, and frequently the context will suggest further thoughts. All this will vary between man and man, and between day and day. Some will write long notes, others short. On some days thoughts come easily, on others only with

difficulty. Some people may find it useful to write a fair copy when the matter has been rearranged, others will arrange their matter methodically at the outset, and so forth. When we have done this, we can leave the sermon to the time, presumably not far distant, when we are going to preach it.

In the case of many of our less formal sermons, the delivery follows close on the first preparation, and even that has to be much curtailed. Such are the few words which we deliver to Holy Family meetings, or other Confraternities, and short addresses at weekday evening services. The Sunday catechetical instruction forms a subject by itself, and the idea that it can be efficiently performed with little or no preparation should be strongly deprecated. It is an opportunity of doing great things for the children, and implanting in their minds ideas which will last them through life, and often be, as it were, their sheet-anchor to keep them to their religion in after years, in times of stress and temptation, or call them back to it if they have unhappily fallen away. The responsibility of such an opportunity is great, and no trouble should be too great to secure its effective performance.

We now come to the time of the sermon's delivery. To some the quarter of an hour immediately before ascending the pulpit is the most important part of the preparation; to all it is *an* important part. It is essential that we should begin with our mind full of our subject. A very little practice will enable us to feel at home in the pulpit once we have begun, and we shall soon acquire self-command and power to collect our thoughts there. Nevertheless, we shall often forget many things which we have thought of during our preparation, while other thoughts will suggest themselves in most unexpected fashion. A celebrated French preacher once said that he had never ended a sermon without

finding that he had omitted most of what he had intended to say, and said much that he had not intended.[1] It matters not: what matters is that when the priest is speaking he should be full of his subject, earnest, enthusiastic, speaking straight from his heart, and above all things zealous for the good of his hearers.

Then let his declamation be simple, earnest, natural. The inflated and artificial style of oratory, current until almost modern times, would to-day be wholly out of place. At best it was ill-suited to so lofty a purpose, and St. Alphonsus only followed the lead of many saints and others in warning the preacher against the style it naturally led to. The present simplicity of taste is far more in keeping with the sacredness of the work. Let the priest say what he means and mean what he says, and the intrinsic force and sacredness of his words will be better than all rhetoric. Above all, let there be no affectation of manner or self-consciousness, which does so much to mar the effect of a sermon. By all means, however, let him practise clearness of utterance.

[1] Perhaps a remark may be here made respecting the eventuality which from time to time occurs to every preacher. All those who have been in the pulpit are familiar with the sudden feeling of blank coming over the mind, and the momentary complete forgetfulness of the scheme of the sermon. The great thing on such an occasion is not to stop. Once one stops to think, ideas go further away, the silence and expectancy of the congregation become oppressive, and the pause seems interminable: it is a question whether we shall ever recover ourselves at all. Whatever happens, one must not stop. One can repeat what one has just said in slightly different words, or give forth any religious sentiment, or the like: this gives time for thought and conditions favourable for thinking, and ordinarily one's ideas will return in plenty of time. And only those who have themselves had experience in preaching are likely to detect what is happening. One can occasionally notice even the most experienced preachers losing their thread in this way, and it is worth noting as an antidote to discouragement.

It is very trying to a congregation to sit before a preacher whom they cannot hear; and especially when such happens through the preacher's neglect of the ordinary rules of elocution. Nor does it usually require any greater effort on the part of the preacher to make himself intelligible. Clearness does not always necessitate loudness, nor is it always achieved by it. A careful utterance in a suitable pitch is really all that is required; and the people should be spared the annoyance of listening to a preacher who clips his words, or only partially pronounces them, or drops his voice so that the last syllable of a word or the last word of a sentence is inaudible: all these faults make it an effort to follow him. And if there is any weakness in the initial *h* or the final *g* of a word, the effect is far from pleasing. In order to draw fruit from a sermon, one wants to be able to follow it *without effort*, and to be undisturbed by fault or peculiarities of enunciation. These ends cannot be attained unless the preacher will take some trouble; but with a little trouble it can easily be done. Nevertheless, it often is *not* done.[1]

The preacher should likewise make an effort to get over his natural shyness and disinclination to use his hands. This will go of its own accord as soon as he has had sufficient practice to feel at home in the pulpit. We do not wish to gesticulate so much as the French priests do—it is not in accordance with the genius of our people; and what is suitable in one country is out of place in another. Still less do we want any forced or unnatural gesticulation. At first we should do with very little. Many Englishmen do always with very little. But in most cases, it comes natural after a time to use

[1] A similar remark applies to the notices, and the Epistle and Gospel, which are sometimes read with quite painful carelessness. This is a point which many laymen feel very much.

the hands, and when it is natural, it increases greatly the force of our words.

A few remarks should be made as to the length of time at which to aim. It is safe to say that the pressure of modern life calls for shorter sermons than our fathers were accustomed to. The practice of five-minute sermons at the Sunday low masses, which first emanated in systematic form from the Paulists of New York, is now fairly common, and of great service to those who cannot attend the principal mass on Sundays. But the curtailing of the chief sermon may easily be overdone. People will never venture to complain of the shortness of a sermon, but in truth one of eight or ten minutes does not satisfy them, nor allow time to develop the matter properly. It may be admitted, however, that shortness is a fault on the right side, and people would not now tolerate the length of sermon that used to be imposed on them. As a general rule, it would be well to be under twenty minutes rather than over, unless the occasion be an important one, with a special preacher, who may allow himself longer. This applies to the chief sermons only; that at the evening service on a weekday, or at Holy Family or Confraternity meetings or the like would naturally be shorter; eight or ten minutes might in many cases be enough. The length of time that we can hold their attention will of course vary somewhat from day to day. One is able to tell at once when the listeners are getting weary. But even when we are conscious that this is so, there may be more good done than we are aware of. Frequently such has afterwards come to our knowledge; in numerous other cases it may have occurred without our knowing it.

Moreover, the good done by a sermon depends on what has been said in the body of the discourse. A good beginning or a good ending may round it off as a literary composition; but they will not appreciably affect the

value of the sermon from the point of view of gaining souls. The same applies to the methodical development of the subject throughout. It is useful to aim at it, but if we fail to attain it, or go astray from the scheme we had made out, no great harm is done. What is important is that whatever we say should come from our heart, and that we should be so united to God as to fulfil our Lord's words, " It is not you that speak, but the spirit of your Father that speaketh in you."[1] This is the way to reach the hearts of our congregation, and to make our sermon in truth part of our pastoral work.

[1] St. Matt. x. 20.

CONFERENCE X

THE RECREATIONS OF A PRIEST

In the rules of every religious order are to be found special provisions with respect to recreation. These are both positive and negative. On the one hand there is usually a daily recreation which all take in common; and besides this, there are other times on feast days or other occasions when the ordinary rule of silence is relaxed and recreation by conversation is possible. On the other hand there are the negative rules, that a subject must not seek recreation outside his monastery, and must not go out for social intercourse with his neighbours without the leave of his superior, for which he must adduce a good reason.

The prominence attached to such regulations shows the important place which the subject holds in the life of the Order or Congregation. With the secular clergy this is no less so; and as is so often the case in comparing the two states, we find that the secular priest has in one sense a harder task, for he has no limitations of rule to guide him and no superior at hand to counsel him. He has to depend on his own strength of will and his own judgment.

But at the beginning of his priestly career, he has even greater difficulty, for it comes at a time when he has just thrown off the restrictions of seminary life, and also when he is reaching the fulness of his manhood. The world which has been kept from him to a great extent up to then now seems to open out and smile before him.

It used to be a frequent question to seminarists, " How soon do you hope to be *out ?* " Now he has come out. He is at once made much of by his new parishioners, who shower upon him invitations to lunch, dinner, supper, or other social gatherings. He needs no small self-control to avoid being carried off his legs at the outset, and being drawn into a daily life such as he never looked forward to when picturing to himself the priesthood.

His personal freedom also tends to increase the difficulty of his state. He has no wife or family to think of, he is alone, and is for the first time in the enjoyment of outward liberty, for his actual priestly duties can in the majority of cases be postponed or adjusted or even omitted to facilitate his recreation. It is very easy for his boy's outlook on life, which he should have put away before entering philosophy, to persist in considerable measure not only during his seminary course, but even after he has begun his career as a priest. Such an attitude is simply to take anything pleasurable or attractive which comes in his way, provided it is not sinful, and to enjoy it.

The state of the newly ordained priest in this respect is vividly depicted by Cardinal Manning :—[1]

" To a priest who enters for the first time upon the sacerdotal life the first danger is the loss of the supports on which he has so long been resting in the seminary. As in the launching of a ship, when the stays are knocked away, it goes down into the water, thenceforward to depend on its own stability ; so a priest going out from the seminary into the field of his work has thenceforward to depend under God upon his own stedfastness of will. The order, method and division of time and of work ; the sound of the bell from early morning through

[1] *Eternal Priesthood*, p. 76.

the day till the last toll at night; the example and mutual influence and friendship of companions in the same sacred life; and still more the nature, counsel and wise charity of superiors—all these things sustain the watchfulness and perseverance of ecclesiastical students until the day when invested with the priesthood, they go out from the old familiar walls and the door is closed behind them. They are in the wide world, secular as the Apostles were—that is, in the world for the world's sake, not of it, but at war with it; of all men the least secular, unless they become worldly, and the salt lose its savour."

A little later he continues:—

"A life of unlimited liberty is encompassed with manifold temptations. A priest coming out of a seminary needs fellowship, and he often seeks it in society. He does not as yet know the character of those about him, or the reputation of the homes to which he is invited. Before he is aware he is often entangled in relations he would not have chosen and in invitations which, if he had the courage, he would refuse. People are very hospitable and pity a priest's loneliness and like to have him at their tables. Sometimes the best of people are least circumspect and most kindly importunate in their invitations. How shall a young and inexperienced mind hold out against these facilities and allurements to relaxation, unpunctuality, self-indulgence and dissipation? The whole of a priest's life may be determined by his first outset. He has been in it too short a time either to gain or to buy experience."

It is not meant to be inferred that all social invitations should be refused and all intercourse with one's neighbour avoided. Such would be both impossible and undesirable. Nor, indeed, can it be allowed that such invitations are by any means always accepted from

motives of recreation at all. Such is of course often the case ; but often it is not. In many instances the priest may be fulfilling a duty of charity, or finding a means of spreading his pastoral work, and the recreation may be a secondary consideration, or may even be absent altogether. Indeed, as a priest gets into years he will find more and more that many of his duties will bring all that is necessary for him in the way of recreation without his seeking it by any special act ; and this even though he has to face much which is dull or unattractive or monotonous to him. The late Canon Oakeley, in his lectures at St. Thomas's Seminary so far back as the year 1870, lays stress on this point :—[1]

" A priest," he writes, " especially in some of the less populous missions, will soon find that social intercourse with his parishioners is quite as often a duty of charity as a means of personal recreation. He must either refuse invitations altogether, or participate in some festivities which will tax his good nature and exercise his self-denial quite as much as many of his severer duties. He may have to sit out a dull dinner-party, with uncongenial companions, on a hot day in summer. He may have to carve a round of beef for thirty hungry children at a Christmas party. He may have to adapt himself to the tastes and manners of the poorer members of his flock at some rural entertainment where his presence will tend to promote innocent mirth and to check dangerous excesses. On these and similar occasions he will find it necessary to put a restraint on his natural inclinations, in order to confer on those for whose happiness he is responsible that especial gratification which good Catholics of every class derive from the sympathy and society of their priest."

[1] *The Priest on the Mission*, p. 209.

Yet, apart from duties of charity, *some* recreative society can lawfully and advisably be sought in the houses of the laity ; but it should be strictly under control and subject to narrow limits. Above all things, a priest must not be a slave to it, so as to be driven by human respect often to accept invitations which his reason may tell him to be inordinate. A priest should not be a pleasure-seeker ; and if he is not ready to deprive himself of much society which has an attractive appearance, for the sake of his work and for the recollection of his life, it is an unfailing sign of the loss of the priestly spirit. But precisely what limits to lay down for himself, cannot be stated in general terms, for it depends not only on a priest's own personality and temperament, but also on the circumstances in which he is placed. Canon Oakeley, however, adds one restriction which should certainly be adhered to, for we live in an ill-natured world, and our best friends are ready to be captious in their fault-finding :—

" The priest in society," he writes, " must never forget that he is a priest. Even if he forgets it, others will not. The ambiguous jest, the anecdote of questionable propriety, the loose and unguarded manner, with other such indications of the unpriestly character, will be remembered and perhaps quoted against him when the evening is over, and when its warping influences have given way to calmer thoughts and cooler judgments. The same persons who in the spirit of hospitable good nature have placed in his way the inducements to those excesses which at least weaken morality, if they do not occasion scandal, will be among the first to criticise the indiscretions to which they have helped to give rise. The demeanour of a priest in society should always be marked by humility, modesty, courtesy and prudence. He should be swift to hear and slow to dogmatise. He

should avoid arguments except when necessary for the vindication of truth; and when thus necessary, he should maintain his side with meekness and in the spirit of charity."

There is one kind of social intercourse that should be an unmixed good, and often is so—the meeting with our fellow clergy. It is difficult to get them together for merely social gatherings; but any part of their work which brings them across their fellow priests is to both parties a source of strength as well as recreation. One of the great advantages of the monthly Theological Conference is that it brings groups of clergy together and is often made the occasion of a dinner or other social gathering. In like manner, not the least of the benefits which the Clergy Fund confers on its members is the bringing together of all the clergy of the South of England once a year to spend an evening in each other's society.

Even gatherings of the clergy, however, are not without their abuses. The sight of a party of priests playing at cards hour after hour, till late at night, with its usual accompaniments, is happily more rare than it once was; but it is hardly obsolete even yet. Of course there is nothing in itself wrong in a game of cards, or in playing for money, provided the stakes are low; but it is well known as leading to much abuse. The excitement is of an unhealthy kind, and whether one is winning or losing, it is difficult to break off when a suitable hour arrives. Indeed, the whole question of card-playing needs treating with caution; both because it so often leads to what is undesirable, and because the recreation it affords is at best out of proportion to the time consumed. After a long session one ends less fresh than one began. A game of whist, or to some extent bridge, in which considerable skill is required, rests on a somewhat different

footing: but even of that we should be wise to exercise a careful control.

From the social side of a priest's life, one naturally turns to that which has most influence on him when he is alone and which will include the chief part of his solitary recreation—his reading. To say that much of the success or failure of his priestly life will depend on the proper direction of his reading is merely to say what is obvious. Leaving out of account his directly spiritual exercises, he will undoubtedly have a large amount of time on his hands which may be most usefully employed in reading, and which otherwise will be simply wasted. A certain proportion of this may be solid work, such as theological or other study, necessitating close application. A mathematician may utilise his powers by studying problems or other matter, which stimulates and improves his mind. But there must be a large amount of time left when the mind is too tired for serious exertion, and this can be profitably devoted to reading of a lighter nature.

The first idea that occurs to one is novels. In past times a stricter view obtained about novel reading than seems to be the case to-day. There is no doubt that a purely sensational novel is a powerful instrument for the loss of time, and it engenders an unhealthy craving for excitement of an undesirable type. A novel which is chiefly read for the excitement of its plot is beyond all doubt the priest's enemy, and a greater and stronger enemy than many realise. Such novels exist to-day in large numbers, and are sold at low prices. Perhaps for that reason they are not spoken of with much respect, and being of a generally low order, are less likely to ensnare us than those of a generation or two ago. This of course does not apply to classical novels, such as Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, etc., nor to many modern novels by standard authors. But there are

many to which it does apply. Even the best novels are permeated with worldly ideals, and the mainspring of the story always turns upon love affairs, which even to a Christian in the world should not be the exclusive motive of life. Nevertheless, if such books are read with care and discrimination, much recreative as well as educational thought can be obtained from them without any serious instilling of wrong principles.

The general subject of novels, however, is too long and complex to discuss here. We can perhaps get a little more practical on that of newspapers. To a priest a certain amount of newspaper reading is not only desirable, but necessary to keep him in touch with the world in which he lives and works. To know what is going on politically, the forces at work in Parliament, the agitations through the country, the relations of capital to labour, the lives and deaths of distinguished men, is essential to the conditions of modern life. Would that newspaper reading stopped there! Alas, many of the principles are unconsciously imbibed and are detrimental to the priestly spirit. This is no new evil. So far back as about the year 1836, Dr. Newsham of Ushaw wrote to Dr. Wiseman, as he then was, Rector of the English College at Rome, deploring the newspaper as the source of much of the want of ecclesiastical spirit among the clergy of his day:—[1]

"I will say to you frankly that there is a very great want of a spirit of piety, faith and religion in our clergy. It is useless to investigate the cause of this. I will say briefly that it has probably in good measure arisen from the great majority of the missionaries being young men, from the little control that has been exercised by the Bishops for many years over their young priests on the mission, and probably above all from the spirit of the

[1] *Sequel to Catholic Emancipation*, i., p. 140.

times which is incessantly infused into the mind of a young man by our abominable newspapers. In fact, a greater pest, a more efficient weapon of the devil does not exist in the world than the English newspapers. Their pernicious effect on the minds of our young ecclesiastics has been observed and lamented by many others as well as myself."

At the present day the evil is of course emphasised by the great profusion of cheap newspapers, and as a rule the cheaper the paper, the lower the style and setting. And a further evil has arisen of reading those parts of them which give a momentary excitement. The little paragraphs are a potent time-waster. Even during the war, the evening papers contain much that is not really of any permanent importance about it, but out of war-time we became familiar with any number of small tit-bits which may beguile the time of a business man returning home from his work, but which are unworthy of the attention of a serious-minded priest. Yet the paper became so full of them that even important news, such as the proceedings of Parliament, became relegated to a back page, or even got omitted altogether.

If we want to see a priest at his worst, we cannot think of a better opportunity than after breakfast on a winter's morning, if we can find him, as we sometimes can, spending an hour or two of the most valuable time of the day, when he is best fitted for work, in sitting before the fire reading the newspaper and smoking pipe or cigarette.

This perhaps suggests a few words about smoking itself, which can be reckoned among a priest's recreations ; and if properly controlled, a very good recreation it may be. The solace of a pipe towards the end of a day, when nature calls for a rest and an opportunity for quiet thought, may be of great assistance to a priest in recuperating after a day's work. And a smoke after meals

is good and healthy for mind and body. But, alas! many people do not limit themselves to moderate smoking, and the habit often leads to sad waste of time. There are indeed some who can work better with a pipe in their mouths: but these are the exception. The ordinary rule is that smoking is only compatible with light occupation. Hence a man who is always craving for a smoke is always craving for a few idle moments. How many small intervals in the day are there which many a priest fills up with a cigarette, with or without a little light reading or newspaper snippets. One does not easily realise how much time can be thrown away in this manner. Cardinal Manning used to have always at hand what he called a "five-minutes book," and he used to tell of the large amount of reading which he thus got through in his short unoccupied intervals.

But the evil of the frequent cigarette is more far-reaching than that. The craving which calls for a few minutes of self-indulgence of this kind is surely an opportunity for a little self-control and mortification: if this is allowed to slip, by degrees one becomes a slave to smoking. And the evils of heavy smoking are many and great. One is the general demoralising effect on oneself. Another is the unpleasant effect it has on others. A heavy smoker is a selfish man: the fact that he inconveniences his neighbour does not deter him. After all, non-smokers form more than half of the congregation, for practically all the women and children are such, besides a not inconsiderable proportion of the men. To non-smokers, the smell of stale smoke is always unpleasant, while not infrequently it engenders unwillingness to go into close contact, as for example in the Confessional. Then again the stained fingers which mark the heavy smoker seem an unworthy instrument for saying mass, and for touching the Blessed Sacrament. Many a person has been kept away from a priest by his

reeking of tobacco. Truly a priest's whole career may be marred by the habit.

The danger of continual smoking at small intervals is obviously much greater in the case of a cigarette than a pipe, and one stage towards self-control in this matter would be to keep the number of cigarettes strictly limited. But the best preservative is to have fixed hours for smoking of any kind and never to smoke outside them.

CONFERENCE XI

THE RECREATIONS OF A PRIEST (*continued*)

THE actual laws about a priest's recreation are, as is almost necessary from the nature of the case, only negative. They enumerate the amusements in which he must not take part. In our own Synods there are two laws, the first of which is taken from the Synod of St. Charles at Milan:—

"Priests should keep away from spectacles unworthy of an ecclesiastic, from clamorous hunting which is carried on with horse and hounds, from public dances, from unlawful games and from feastings which are protracted till late in the night."

"We strictly forbid clerics in Holy Orders from being present at scenic representations in public theatres [or in places which serve for the time as public theatres],[1]

[1] The words within brackets were added at the Synod of 1872, at which Archbishop Manning presided.

The following is the original text:—

"Abstineant sacerdotes a spectaculis viro ecclesiastico indignis, a venatione clamorosa quae equo et canibus fit, a publicis choreis, ab illicitis ludis, et a cornessationibus quae usque ad intempestam noctem protrabuntur. Prohibemus districte ne ecclesiastici saeris Ordinibus initiati, scenis spectaculis in publicis theatris vel in locis theatri publici usui ad tempus inservientibus intersint, imponentes transgressoribus poenam suspensionis ipso facto incurrendam, hactenus ubique in Anglia vigentem, cum reservatione respectivo Ordinario" (*Westmonast.* i. xxiv. 2; iv. x. 9).

The corresponding law in the new Codex is:—

"Spectaculis, choreis et pompis quae eos dedecent vel quibus clericos interesse scandalo sit, praesertim in publicis theatris, ne intersint" (Canon 140).

imposing on transgressors the penalty of suspension incurred *ipso facto*, as has hitherto been in force throughout England, with reservation to their respective Ordinary."

The first of these laws is sufficiently vague to admit of considerable variety of interpretation. So far as public dances or balls are concerned, the practice has always been to regard them as not the place for a priest. At the time of the French Revolution, the *émigrés* clergy, who were received in England with such hospitality, used to be invited to all kinds of festivities, and no doubt their heads became somewhat turned. At any rate, many of them used to stay up the greater part of a night at balls to which they were asked, until it reached the ears of the Bishop, who prohibited it. In truth, if balls or dances were ever so innocent, such dissipation prolonged into the night is incompatible with priestly life.

It would seem, however, from recent decisions that the Holy See means a rather stricter interpretation to be affixed to the law, and although these actual decisions may only bind locally, in the United States and Canada, it seems hardly rash to infer that it is intended to discountenance priests generally from attending or promoting entertainments which include dancing.[1]

With respect to the rest of the law, it is difficult to be very precise; but we shall not be far wrong if we adopt a general rule that in every case when a priest is tempted to conceal his priesthood, and adopt a costume which will allow his being taken for a layman, he is on the verge of frequenting "a spectacle unworthy of an ecclesiastic." It can be done with care without breaking the letter of the law about ecclesiastical dress, simply by

[1] *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, May, 1916, p. 147, and January, 1918, p. 17.

covering the Roman collar and wearing a dark grey coat ; and it has been done in the past by those who wished to attend a spectacle where a Roman collar would be out of place.

In the case of going to a football or cricket ground, especially the latter, to watch the game, the case is wholly different, for we find plenty of Roman collars openly worn. At the time of writing, the war has put an end to the possibility of this pastime for so long a period that one has almost forgotten its fascination. We are even inclined to wonder how we could ever have allowed the first-class cricket scores to have the prominence they once had in our thoughts. For it is not many years ago that the *Daily Mail* would announce the " sad plight of England " cabled from the Antipodes during a Test Match with as much prominence as is now given to apprehended danger of invasion by the Germans. If cricket ever fully revives, however, there is a good deal to be said in favour of an occasional afternoon at Lord's or the Oval. It gives one fresh air and an amount of occupation not inconsistent with quiet reflection on more serious topics. To watch a game of football is in some ways less desirable, not only because the excitement is more concentrated, but because the general tone of the crowd is rougher. Still, a priest can go in his Roman collar.

It is hardly necessary to point out that the unlawful games alluded to have no relation to our English athletic exercises. The modern counterpart would perhaps be games at cards for high stakes, about which some words have already been said. The question of athletics is a very different one. Cardinal Manning, though himself in his younger days a cricketer, took a stern view of a priest playing. " Can you imagine "—he would say—" going before your Creator for judgment with a chalice in one hand and a cricket bat in the other ? " Or again,

"Should a priest have time to throw away in running after a piece of leather?" It may be doubted whether he often carried conviction with such arguments. Still, these considerations cannot be wholly put aside. But it would be narrow-minded to make objection to athletics in general, if indulged in with moderation, and in suitable surroundings. Either tennis or cricket may be good for both soul and body, though the latter game exacts so much time that it is only exceptionally within the priest's reach. But the game of golf, so much in vogue in later years, is almost an ideal one as a clerical recreation. In this, however, as in all matters of recreation the personal tastes—and personal attainments—must be the decisive factor. Many have no inclination for athletics after leaving school. They find as they grow older that the exercise which comes naturally with their daily work satisfies their needs, with perhaps an occasional long walk, which they designate a "constitutional"; and often during such "constitutional" they can do some valuable thinking. Some writers do a large part of their composition while out walking.

There is another form of athletics which is capable of great use, or of some abuse—that is, the bicycle. In these days, indeed, it has become so much part of every-day life that many use it simply for the purpose of getting from place to place. But it can also be used on a larger scale to provide an excellent recreation. As a physical exercise indeed, it is exacting, especially when—as will often be the case—the weather is unfavourable, or the wind in the wrong direction, and it is doubtful whether it conduces much physically to health. But it has an admirable power of taking away a man from his daily surroundings and giving him a complete mental change and rest. If the weather is fine, indeed, and the conditions favourable, it tends occasionally to make inroads into our work. But if used judiciously it may be the

occasion of much educative interest, and give one some of the advantages of travel which the modern railway transport from point to point fails to give. Mr. Ruskin refused to travel by train, and to be conveyed, as he said, like a parcel. If he had lived in the days of bicycling, he might have found the key to his difficulty. The bicyclist makes close acquaintance with the people and the places through which he travels ; he can visit the old churches and interest himself in their history ; he can see the various industries and way of life of the people among whom he goes, and so forth. This is still more so if he has a motor-cycle, as his range of country is so largely increased. His interest may be developed by a portable camera ; and indeed photography in itself is a capital recreation. So is botany, or geology, or any kind of hobby which a man may take up. And any hobby is to be encouraged. If a man says he has no time to pursue a hobby, he is probably an idle man. One who is keen can make time and this is in every way an advantage.

We can now turn to consider the second synodical law —that against frequenting the theatre—which is not only more precise, but has a heavy penalty attached to its infringement, that the delinquent is *ipso facto* suspended from his priestly functions and commits a sin reserved to his Bishop. Such a stringent law indicates that the matter is viewed seriously.

The fact is that the Church has always spoken in strong terms against the theatre. Bishop Milner uses his customary violent language in that sense. "Everyone knows," he says,[1] "that actors and actresses by the laws of the Church and the particular constitutions of our mission[2] are considered as habitual sinners and in a

[1] *Life*, p. 112.

[2] The first rule prohibiting the theatre to priests was made at the Synod of Winchester and Old Hall in 1803, which was indeed the first occasion on which the four Vicars Apostolic were

state of damnation, to whom therefore the sacraments are to be denied. Setting aside, then, all other consideration, can any Christian think it lawful by his or her presence or money to assist in keeping these wretches in such a state?" And again, "What are the opinions, the taste, the conduct, and in a word, the lessons which are inculcated by the theatre? I say that the very best modern tragedies exhibit and recommend that pride, ambition, vainglory, impatience, anger and revenge which are the very reverse of our Divine Master's morality inculcated in the eight beatitudes. And with respect to all the comedies and almost all the tragedies, they are made up of the sentiments, the intrigues and the gratification of the concupiscence of the flesh under the specious and all-meaning name of Love."

Probably few would be found to speak in that drastic manner to-day. It is, to say the least, remarkable that the actor's profession seems to contain a greater proportion of Catholics than almost any other, and although we cannot regard it as free from dangers, the activities of the Catholic Stage Guild, and the fact that it is under high ecclesiastical patronage show that the profession is not regarded as in itself illicit. Moreover, those who have come across actors in private life can testify to the fact that a large amount of real goodness exists among them, and that as a class, they are very charitable, and aim at high ideals.

Nevertheless, the considerations put forward by Dr. Milner cannot be too lightly set aside, even under modern conditions. One of the dangers of the stage is that it unconsciously undermines Christian morality, substituting that of the world: extolling pride as a virtue, looking down on the humble as poor-spirited and

able to hold a meeting to consider such matters at all. The penalty enacted was then as now, suspension *ipso facto*, reserved to the Bishop.

the like. A Catholic spectator may honestly believe himself to be unharmed, whereas as a fact his hold on Christian principles may have been lowered, and worldly ideals substituted in their place.

It is true indeed that a new stamp of theatrical representation has arisen since the date of Dr. Milner, typified by the Gilbert and Sullivan comic operas, or the burlesques which were so fashionable a generation or two ago. These produce much mirth and recreation, and are free from the danger alluded to. But it is worth noting that it is just these pieces which are most infected with improprieties of dress from which Christian eyes should be kept.

A somewhat similar remark applies to the Italian Opera, which was once the very height of fashion, and still retains a part at least of its former distinction. The plot or *libretto* takes a comparatively secondary place and does not attract much attention, it being only the setting of the music, which is the chief attraction. But as a set-off, we are frequently brought face to face with a ballet of a most improper nature. Certainly the inference drawn by the ordinary frequenter of the theatre is that such performances are not wrong, and it is prudish to object to them.

And if it be argued that one meets with similar worldly ideals in novels, or even in everyday life, or that the state of the London streets brings similar indecorum before one, the answer is simple: what one meets with by accident in everyday life is one thing; what is put for before us for our admiration and dressed in its most attractive form is a totally different one; and many a man drinks in an idea unthinkingly at the theatre which he would not assimilate in the same way by mixing in everyday life or even by reading a novel. In the case of a regular frequenter of the theatre, we find his whole outlook on life distorted by its morality.

In similar way, though the views of Cardinal Manning against all kinds of theatrical entertainments are commonly admitted to have been extreme, what he says cannot be dismissed too easily, for it contains much truth.

"Every theatre," he writes, "is the centre of a neighbourhood abounding in all manner of evil, which lives and thrives on the theatrical world. There are upon the stage many good men and many good women; but also of both many bad. The spirit and surroundings and tide of the stage are dangerous and downward. The classes and trades that thrive by it are too well known to need words from me. Why should anyone aid, abet, comfort or share in such a traffic, even by the price of a box or a single ticket? I had rather have no liability however limited in such a trade."

Probably most persons to-day would look upon these words as a somewhat overdrawn picture, and it is to be hoped that we shall not be considered wanting in respect in taking a somewhat less rigid view. Perhaps we may apply the same principles as St. Francis of Sales applies to persons living in the world assisting at parties, balls, and social dissipations generally[1]—that such things should be taken with caution and not too frequently, in which case the recreation and other good which they provide may be obtained, and the harm avoided. Thus, if it be argued that the need of recreation in the modern world is great, that the stage contains much that is entertaining, or at times even elevating, and that its evils may be counteracted in the case of one who is solidly instructed in his religion, a strong case might be made in favour of frequenting the theatre provided it is not done too often, and that one knows that there are dangers lurking which require watchfulness and care. It may be urged that Cardinal

[1] *Devout Life*, chapter xxxiii.

Manning, from his very nature, never realised the necessity or use of real recreation, for he seemed able to work continuously without any; and, moreover, the particular recreation of the theatre was to a great extent a closed book to him, for it is well known that early in life he made a resolution not to put his foot inside one, and he kept it throughout his life. This would seem to be a justification for at least taking a somewhat less rigid view than his on the matter.

But in the case of the priest, the question is totally different. Such dissipation in such surroundings is incompatible with his general life, and out of harmony with the stern seriousness of the priestly vocation. It prevents recollection at a time of day when it is especially needed, and his morning's Meditation and mass must suffer. Moreover, a priest in a Roman collar is an official, and must not countenance by his presence the indecorum which is of such frequent occurrence in every theatre.

Yet one has heard of some priests regretting the law; but the arguments put forward by them do not appeal with much force. One is that the theatre has changed since the law was made and it is not now objectionable as it once was. It is remarkable to note how this has always been said. So far back as the time of Dr. Milner this argument was used, as he himself testified. It is probable that as times goes on, plays become more outwardly respectable, and the improprieties are less emphasised; possibly for that very reason they are more insidious. The general spirit of the theatre does not seem to change, and is not likely to.

During the last decade of the eighteenth century, before the penal state of Catholics had been relaxed, no law on the subject existed; and the celebrated preacher, Rev. James Archer, used to go to the play, to get a lesson in elocution; and when in 1803, at the first meet-

ing of Bishops which approached the nature of a Synod, they forbade the practice, Mr. Archer was very irate. The style of eloquence at that epoch was far more inflated and artificial than anything with which we are familiar, and we can hardly imagine such complaint being made now; but even in recent times, one has heard of Catholic actors being asked to give a priest some hints on elocution. As regards actual delivery, and means of making ourselves audible, it is possible that they might give some useful advice; but it is certain that the real value of a sermon will never depend much on mere rules of rhetoric; and any rhetoric which is artificial is a hindrance, not a help.

Then again it is urged that the rule does not act justly: there are places more unsuitable than theatres, such as music-halls, which are not forbidden. This indeed is possible enough. It is exceedingly hard to draft a rule which shall cover exactly the cases desired, and the difficulty is increased tenfold when the rules were made seventy years ago, for the style, for example, of music-hall entertainment has wholly changed in that time. No rule against music-halls was necessary then, as no priest would have thought of going to one. In recent years the type of music-hall has become higher, and if the law were made to-day, it is possible that a reference to them might be thought desirable. But after all, even if it were granted that the rule may be worded badly, that would not interfere with the undoubted fact that the theatre was intended to be forbidden, and no inclination has ever been shown to go back from the rule.

In recent years a wholly new problem has presented itself by the invention of the cinematograph. The present state of picture palaces gives much room for thought and almost makes one weep. The attractiveness and low price bring it within the reach of all.

What a power it might be for educating the people, and raising the tone of their recreations ! Yet in fact it does the very reverse. The reason is simply the style of film which is shown. Here and there one gets an interesting and educative one—such, for examples, as the official war films which have been shown—but even these are usually sandwiched between the low farcical vulgar displays which in the majority of cinemas constitute the whole performance. They are indeed free from some at least of the objectionableness of the theatre ; but that is all that can be said in their favour. Indeed, much of the juvenile criminality which seems on the increase has been confidently attributed to these picture palaces.

With respect to the desirability of the priest going to a cinema—for it is not against any definite law—it is difficult to lay down a general rule. Certainly there are many low-class cinemas which he would never think of attending. Some of the better-class places in London or elsewhere might sometimes provide him with useful recreation ; but it is only stating what is obvious in saying that he will treat the matter with great caution.

CONFERENCE XII

THE ANNUAL HOLIDAY

In these days regular holidays every year have become a recognised necessity for a life such as that of a priest in this country. The effect of modern conditions of living, the prevalence of "slum" neighbourhoods, with their generally depressing surroundings, the continual pressure of such concentrated daily work, all bring with them as a corollary the necessity of from time to time being released from them altogether for a while, and modern invention has also provided the means of getting away from one's work easily and cheaply, which our ancestors neither possessed nor needed. The expression "he is away on his holiday" has passed into our language.

Whatever is to be said of the general hardness of a priest's life, in this one respect it stands out as more fortunate than that in most other professions. A priest on a town mission—and it is on such a mission that a holiday is really needed—commonly has four consecutive Sundays off duty once every year, which means in many cases that he is able to absent himself for nearly five weeks. The conditions of his life render this possible, and nobody grudges it. Even the war has not interfered with a priest's holidays, at any rate as regards their length. And in this country they are more systematically regularised than in most others. Some half a century ago a Belgian Bishop wrote to Cardinal Manning asking him to dissuade his priests from visiting Belgium

when on their annual holiday, lest they should unsettle the local clergy and instigate them also to look for holidays. In our time, however, holidays for priests, before the war, were not so unknown there. A primary result of this systematic arrangement for holidays is that an appreciable part of a priest's life is spent in this way, and it becomes of importance for us to enquire how we spend it.

The science of arithmetical addition often produces startling results. A person adding up accounts for the first time is surprised at the total amount of money that he finds has passed through his hands, both on the credit and on the debit side. Let us apply the process to the priest's holiday. We will suppose that the average time he takes is one calendar month—which is ordinarily well within the mark. In the first twelve years of his priesthood therefore he spends a year in holidays. One who has reached his silver jubilee has occupied over two years so : an old priest may have spent four or five years in this way. Clearly much will depend both in time and in eternity on how it has been spent.

Or we may look at the arithmetic from another point of view. If one month in every twelve is spent in vacation, it would seem to follow by the law of averages that one priest in twelve would have to meet his death during his holidays. For several reasons, however, this estimate has to be modified. Death is not ordinarily so sudden but that the illness which precedes it will show itself in time to prevent the priest from starting on his vacation. But suppose we reduce the estimate from one in twelve to one in fifty, or even one in a hundred, that still leaves us matter for serious reflection ; and experience shows that this is not much above the mark. It is no uncommon thing to hear of a priest who started on his holidays, if not in good health, at least with the hope of regaining it, and his hopes being frustrated either by the arrival of

death while he is still away, or by his being just able to return home to die. This surely, if we have the prudence and forethought which a priest ought to have, should make us pause and consider. If it is possible, and not extremely improbable, that so important a moment may have to be faced during our outing, it is essential that we should not relax our spirit of recollection so completely but that we may be able quickly to resume it when confronted by a crisis.

Now it is precisely here that the difficulty of spending our vacation well comes in. It is essential for the very purpose for which we go away that we should relax our spiritual exercises to some extent, otherwise our vacation will fail of its effect, and we shall return without that freshness which forms so valuable a send-off to the next year's work. The recreations of a priest's life are at all times difficult to regulate—as we have seen in the preceding Conferences. To succeed in obtaining relaxation of mind, without at the same time incurring dissipation, is never easy: and most of us in looking back on our past lives will probably find more to regret in the time given to recreation than in any other time. But the difficulty is greatly increased when recreation is the order of our daily life, and our ordinary elevating influences are for the time to a great extent in abeyance. Yet we know that an ill-spent holiday leaves us on a lower level than it found us; habits and practices are gone, and there is nothing in their place except, perhaps, half-formed habits of self-indulgence and general slackness.

But there is in truth another side to vacation time which is the very opposite to its dissipating side. It is a time when being released for a while from our daily work and anxieties, our mind turns back on our life as a whole, our shortcomings, our prospects for the future, our devotions and spiritual exercises, and the

like. Some periods of vacation time may be in this way almost as good as a retreat. The possibility of utilising it thus of course depends to some extent on our surroundings, how we are spending it, whom we are with, and what doing. But we shall usually have sufficient unoccupied time at our disposal, whether we are with our friends or relations, or on our travels, and we can without forgoing any real relaxation let our thoughts revert to our life and our work as a priest, which indeed we shall naturally do if our interest in them is what it should be. If we do not, much of our time will be simply thrown away. The author of the *Imitation* says that sickness changes no man, but shows what he is. Something similar may be said of holidays. The manner in which they are spent, and the thoughts which come uppermost will be a clear index of the state of mind, spiritually, of the man who spends it. And if the occasion is utilised, it will afford a valuable offset to the natural dissipation of the period.

If, then, so much depends on the vacation being well spent, some thought should certainly be taken in good time beforehand, that the natural falling to low level may be checked by definite resolutions made in advance, for when the time comes, the surroundings are not favourable to making laws for ourselves. The following remarks then are intended as a help towards sanctifying a time which it is more easy to lose ground than at any other period of the year.

1. The Roman collar should never be taken off, or at least no outward change should be made which would indicate that we are trying to disguise our priesthood. It is true that theologians tell us that under certain circumstances, when on a journey, it is lawful to do so; but "all things are lawful to me, but all things do not edify."[1] It is said that to be dressed as a layman

[1] 1 Cor. x. 23.

makes one freer, and this is no doubt the case ; but it is questionable whether such freedom is desirable. The restraint of one's priesthood, and the general rule that wherever one cannot appear as a priest, one will not go at all, is a useful check on our lives at such times. Incidentally it may be remarked that the disguise will not often be successful, and many will see through it. The shorn appearance, the general want of fit about the clothes, and the evident discomfort at wearing so unusual a garb attract observation ; and sooner or later, the suspicion aroused is confirmed by the appearance of a well-worn Breviary, out of which the disguised priest is saying his Office. The general effect is lowering both on others and himself. The feeling that it is a disguise brings with it the practical conviction that he is acting in a manner unbecoming to his state. Once a priest, always a priest, and it is only in very exceptional circumstances that one should ever pretend to be anything else. The priest's dress will not interfere with any recreation which is suitable for him.

2. A certain minimum number of times for saying mass should be fixed and closely adhered to. Even outside that limit, mass should not be omitted without real cause. The sight of a priest who has put his mass away at the beginning of his holidays as "work," to be left behind until he returns, or at most to be produced on Sundays, has in the past been unfortunately too common ; and the reaction which induced a priest when freed from his morning exercises to stay in bed inordinately late is not edifying. There are indeed days when a rest is needful, or advisable, or when it is difficult to make suitable arrangements, or when all time available is wanted for an excursion, or to catch an early train ; but in many instances there is no such reason. In truth a fervent priest should be specially anxious about his mass at such times, both because he

will feel the need of it to sanctify his holiday, and because in fact being temporarily relieved from his daily anxieties, he is able to say it with a new freshness and devotion.

3. As to Meditation, in most cases one could hardly expect the ordinary half-hour before mass, and if one's holiday is to be successful, one must necessarily ease off some of one's spiritual exercises. But there is really no reason for abandoning Meditation altogether. A short period, even five or ten minutes, whether as thanksgiving after mass, or at some other time of day, will be more valuable than double that time in the ordinary working part of the year. About this, as about other exercises, it is important to have a rule, and to keep to it, save in exceptional circumstances; but the exact nature of the rule depends so largely on the personal equation that one hesitates to put forward any suggestion too definitely.

4. The Divine Office of course cannot be omitted for any ordinary reason. But it can easily be put into odd times—more easily during a holiday than during the working part of the year—or left to the end of the day, when it is said without devotion, as fast as possible, simply to get it over. The loss by this is the greater from the very fact that the Divine Office is the one devotion which is binding even in holiday season. A definite rule is a help in such cases, and if the burden of anticipating Matins and Lauds is felt too great, a rule, for example, to finish to the end of Prime before mid-day ought not to be too difficult to be usually kept. But what precise rule to make, like many other details, must depend on the nature of our holiday and where we find ourselves. At least let there be some rule to aim at: don't let it be simply a case of drifting.

This, therefore, suggests a few words as to what kind of a holiday a priest will take. In many cases this

settles itself by the exigencies of circumstances. He may have a home to go to, with parents still living, or he may have relatives and friends to stay with. In other cases he may be able to go for a regular tour with a fellow priest or other companion. The former class of case is perhaps more difficult to regulate, as the priest has to accommodate himself to the ways of those with whom he is staying. A general rule to be well occupied all day, and to retire in good time so as to be fresh for the next day, is very easily written down: to keep it without making oneself uncongenial requires both determination and tact. Often it may be possible to regulate one's retirement at night in this way; but sometimes it is not, and in such circumstances we have no choice but to accept what we find. The rule of occupying ourselves can however practically always be kept. The reproach that the English take their recreation sadly—perhaps seriously would be a better word—is really an allusion to one of the most favourable sides of our national character. To spend the time in aimless lounging—the *dolce far niente* so dear to the typical Italian—is not in itself congenial to our nature; yet the habit not infrequently invades our holiday time, especially at the seaside. The description a priest once wrote of himself that he had spent day after day in sitting on the sands, and getting behind-hand in his Office, is typical of a whole class of holidays; but by no means of all. One easy way to guard absolutely against it is to have a carefully chosen holiday book, sufficiently light to recreate, yet entertaining and educative, to produce on any day on which we find that, through stress of weather or other cause, there is no definite occupation on hand.

If a priest is fortunate enough to be able to travel on a regular tour, it is unnecessary to point out how fully his time will be occupied, provided he takes at least an

intelligent interest in what he sees. The effect of travelling is very broadening, for one meets—even in one's own country—with customs and surroundings very different from those of the particular place in which we live; and the amount of human history contained in churches and other public buildings and dwelling-houses is very great. Moreover, the effect of natural scenery is always elevating. If—as was possible before the war, and will some day be possible again—a priest can visit Catholic countries, he will find much to be of high spiritual advantage to him. It is often possible to make a pilgrimage to a shrine part of our holiday, and thus to unite recreation with high spiritual profit. To visit such places as Lourdes or Ars in France, or Einsiedeln in Switzerland, or Loreto or Genezzano in Italy—to mention only a few typical ones—is not only an interesting experience, but will also be a source of grace and blessing. One sees Catholic practices freely developed, without the restraining influences which the surroundings of Protestantism render inevitable here in England. The simple devotion, wholly free from self-consciousness, which one sees joined with such extraordinary fervour in places of pilgrimage, are full of elevating effect in ourselves, and the atmosphere of faith among the people all around us is as good as a revelation.

The shrine at Lourdes is too well known to need any words here. Apart from any question of miracles—which in fact assume a very secondary place there—the spirit of devotion among the thousands of pilgrims from all parts of the world, and the absolute contentment of the sick who have been brought from afar, and are often in acute physical pain, give one a picture which one would not have believed to be realisable in this world. The surroundings of Ars, again, are of special interest from a different point of view as bringing

us close to the life of a real saint and parish priest, for the date of the curé's death is still within living memory. Then, again, to find a shrine such as *Notre Dame des Victoires* in the midst of such a cosmopolitan city as Paris, where so much evil is known to be rampant, is instructive and edifying. But there is a shrine not a hundred miles from there to which surely English people should be attracted more than they are: that is, the shrine of St. Edmund of Canterbury, at Pontigny. One of the last of our English saints to be canonised, his life is not inferior in interest to that of any of his predecessors. He died in exile in France, and by a curious combination of circumstances, the great Cistercian Abbey Church at Pontigny, where his body is over the altar, survived both the dangers of the Huguenots in the sixteenth century and the great Revolution at the end of the eighteenth, and stands to-day almost in the same condition in which St. Edmund knew it in 1240. It is really a reproach to English Catholics that so few go there. In recent years, a certain number of High Church Anglicans have visited it. Unfortunately it is in one of the worst parts of France, where religion languishes; but even there, twice a year—on the feast of the Saint in November and that of the Translation of his Relics, kept there in Whitsun Week—the massive church is filled with pilgrims from afar.

But apart from actual shrines, a priest will find in the atmosphere of a Catholic country and in the daily life of the people plenty of thought on which to build up his own spiritual aspirations. If he says mass in good time in the morning, he will find perhaps many people in the church engaged on their own spontaneous devotions. On a Sunday the succession of mass-goers is continuous; the liturgical services draw large congregations; and Catholicism seems to be in the very air one breathes. Even in large cities it is a prominent

feature ; in country towns and villages it pervades the whole life of the people. The idea of the Catholicity of the Church is brought home to us when we find ourselves so manifestly belonging to the same body as these devout souls, and the holiday becomes strengthening to the soul as well as the body.

CONFERENCE XIII

THE PERIODICAL RETREAT

In view of the fact that our own synodal law prescribes a Retreat for every priest only every second year,[1] and the new Codex of Canon Law only insists on one every third year,[2] it might appear that either one or the other is the limit at which we should aim. Such, however, is surely not the case. It is true that even though our Synodal law still holds—as has been recently decided by the Holy See—no more frequent Retreat is required as of obligation than once in two years, and in some countries where there is no special local law, the longer interval —once in three years—may be lawful. Yet, without asserting any obligation, the present writer deliberately urges a yearly Retreat as the ideal. Wherever circumstances permit it—as in Ireland or Belgium or elsewhere—this has always been the practice. Moreover, the wording both of the synodal law and of the new Codex by no means excludes this as the ideal ; in each case the word *saltem*, or " at least," is joined to the specification of the obligatory period.

[1] "Singuli sacerdotes teneantur, quoque saltem biennio, exercitia spiritualia quae Episcopus providebit, adire" (*I. Westmonast*, xxiv. 7).

[2] "Omnes sacerdotes saeculares debent tertio saltem anno spiritualibus exercitiis, per tempus a proprio Ordinario determinandum, in pia aliqua religiosave domo, ab eodem designata vacare ; neque ab eis quisquam eximatur, nisi in casu particulari, justa de causa, ac de expressa ejusdem Ordinarii licentia" (Canon 126).

But it would surely appear that an earnest priest would himself desire it. The idea that a Retreat is an irksome duty, to be discharged as best it can, is surely a very inadequate one. It should be a time to which a priest looks forward with longing, when he can put away his work for a few days, and attend to matters which are in the strictest sense personal, and if we may say so, selfish ; and in which he may commune with Almighty God in a manner which the hard work of his daily life renders difficult or at times impossible. True the Retreat involves a serious work and an important Confession, and the renewal of many resolutions which have fallen into abeyance. Such a work will not be accomplished without serious effort, and often involves facing trouble and discouragement during its course. A Retreat is by no means the recreation which its name almost implies. But its interest is supreme. It touches all that aspect of life which should be vital to us, and it tests our progress in that aspect of our lives which alone matters.

If the Retreat is to be for us the event which ought to be the centre and crown of our year's work, certain conditions must be complied with which often are not. Let us consider these in detail.

The first question is when and where to make the Retreat. The Synod seems to assume that it will be made by all the diocesan clergy in common at the time and place provided for by the Bishop. Whether this is to be taken strictly or not, has been much discussed ; our tradition has been that a priest making a solitary Retreat at a religious house satisfies the obligation, though making a Retreat at one's own house does not. The new Codex, however, seems in this respect stricter than our Synodal Law, and provides definitely for the common clergy Retreat unless special exception be made for a just cause by the Bishop himself. Hence

it would appear that ordinarily at least every three years the common Retreat is obligatory.

But apart from strict obligation, there is every reason that, except in special circumstances, the priests should join in the common diocesan Retreat. There are indeed some persons who find it a difficulty, and who can make a better Retreat in private ; but they are the exception. At any rate, it is necessary for the Bishop to give leave in any particular case. In making application, at least let the priest bear in mind that at best he will lose the graces attached to the corporate act, and will not be helping his fellow clergy as he might be, so that only a strong reason should induce him to apply ; for very naturally a Bishop would be slow to give a negative answer. On the other hand, a priest who willingly conforms brings consolation to his Bishop and helps in the sanctification of the diocesan clergy as a whole.

In order to bring about the possibility of a general Retreat, it is sometimes necessary that the parish services should be curtailed or omitted during that week. Let there be no hesitation in, if necessary, reducing the week-day masses or omitting them altogether or omitting evening services. The people will fully enter into the reason, provided it is explained to them, and will willingly join in prayer for the blessing of God on the Retreat.

In the next place, if we properly esteem the Retreat, and wish to draw down God's blessing on it, we should show our esteem by making up our minds in good time beforehand that we will make it. The experience of a curate returning from his holiday on a Saturday, discussing his plans on Sunday, and making up his mind not till Monday morning that he will join the diocesan Retreat would seem to indicate his view of it as a disagreeable duty to be performed because it is ordered.

No one would treat an important or attractive work in this way. What wonder that he arrives on the scene without thought or preparation, spends most of the Tuesday resting himself, and finds he is slack on the remaining two and a half days? And can he wonder that the special graces to be looked for come to him only sparingly? Even those who have made up their minds to join the Retreat, often spend the whole of Monday at their ordinary work, till the very last minute before starting; or even arrive late and thus emphasise a bad beginning. "Before prayer, prepare thy soul," says the holy writer, "and be not as a man that tempteth God."[1] One who is in earnest about what is before him will break off his ordinary occupation, except such as is absolutely necessary, all Monday, so as to be ready to begin the work of the Retreat in the evening.

Similar conditions hold as to the ending of the Retreat. Formerly this was not till the Saturday morning after the general Communion. In recent years, however, it has been customary to finish early in the afternoon of Friday. But a considerable number do not stop for the end, and we often see a priest who thinks nothing of returning from his holiday at a late hour, sometimes not far from midnight, at the end of a Retreat wishing to be back "in good time" and cutting short the Retreat accordingly. Or sometimes a priest will return early on the plea of doing his Friday evening service. This ought not to be so, and a rule against doing any pastoral work whatever on the Friday would remove the temptation.

With respect to the body of the Retreat, let each one determine what is necessary for himself to go through it with real profit. Certainly a mere attendance at the discourses is not enough. The work to be done is a real

[1] Ecclus. xviii. 23.

and active one. The Jesuits realise this, and they do not usually use the word Retreat, which connotes its negative side, but prefer to use the expression " spiritual exercises," which connotes its positive side. In truth, the *ennui* of the Retreat, from which so many suffer, comes from looking exclusively on the negative side. If we are properly active and at work, the time will pass rapidly and will appear all too short. This is for the modern priest undoubtedly far the most important aspect of the Retreat. It is indeed a help to keep silence and to be away from one's work and distractions, but that will not benefit us unless we have other work to replace that which we have put away. And this will save us from the temptation to use our time in preparing sermons or instructions for the next Sunday or two. Let it be remembered that even for the following one we shall have the Saturday at our disposal for such preparation.

The keeping of silence indeed, helpful though it may be, is not of the essence of the Retreat. Considering how seldom we meet our fellow clergy, some intercourse will be in many ways desirable. It is well, if possible, to regulate this, and the modern custom of having an hour's recreation at the dinner has much to recommend it.

A word may be added on the importance of regularity at all the exercises. It may be that some of them appeal to our personal taste less than others. Some persons prefer saying their Office in private in place of the public recitation usual in clergy retreats. Others are inclined to avoid the Stations of the Cross ; and so on. But surely a Retreat is of all times one in which to sink our personal tastes, so as to join in the corporate act. The same applies to taking our share in the community duties, such as reading in Refectory, or serving at the altar, or taking special part such as e.g. a Lesson in

the Office, or other duties. To avoid them is a sign of selfishness. To be willing to sacrifice oneself in small ways is a powerful means to bring a blessing on the Retreat and the example to others will not be thrown away.

The old habit of refraining from saying mass during the Retreat has now almost gone out, and Benediction is commonly given not only at the conclusion as formerly but every evening of the Retreat. It would seem hardly too much to ask that at least one mass be set aside for the intentions of the Retreat for ourselves and others; for considering how much of the success of the year's work depends on the Retreat being made well, every effort should be made to secure God's blessing on it. In the Society of Jesus, it is part of the rule after the first years of priesthood to devote a whole year to a second novitiate: those doing so are known as tertians, as they are going through a third year as novices. It is easy to see what special value such additional novitiate may have, after the priest has been sufficiently long time in active work to realise and appreciate its value. We may well envy them in having this opportunity of entering into themselves so thoroughly. The only thing that we seculars have to compare with it is the periodical Retreat. It is little enough, lasting only a few days compared with a whole year of the tertianship. Let us learn to esteem that little more, and to make it the opportunity of overhauling our whole life, and making good resolutions for the future. Let us always remember that some day we shall make a Retreat which will prove to be our last serious preparation for death. We have been frequent witnesses of this in others: one day it will happen to ourselves. Yet when we are making the Retreat, we probably shall not know such to be the case. We may be well and strong, and with a good prospect of life before us: yet God may know

that this is our last great opportunity. Surely this thought, if no other, should stimulate us to make the Retreat well, so as not to have it ever said against us that we had the power given us of making a full preparation for our last passage, but omitted to use it.

CONFERENCE XIV

THE PRIEST IN SICKNESS—AND IN DEATH

It is a well-known fact that St. Bernard preferred to found a monastery in a not too healthy locality, as he considered it better for a religious life that the monks should not be in too robust health. This is often given as a reason why the Cistercian monasteries are frequently built in specially relaxing climates. Since those days, however, the world has greatly changed. Human nature is not so tough as it then was; mortifications which then were common would now be impossible. Even during the last century things have changed in this respect. It is only a century and a quarter ago that Bishop Talbot was blamed by many for a Lenten Indult which included meat three times a week for the first four weeks, and limited the consecutive abstinence to Passiontide, or the last fortnight. The last of those who used to observe a "black Lent" (as it was called) died almost within living memory. Yet amidst modern conditions nothing approaching a "black Lent" could possibly be enacted, and even the very modified fast of the modern Indults finds very few observers. It is probably the case to-day that valetudinarianism and small ailments are a greater hindrance to spirituality than robustness, and that the highest aim of mortification should be that amount which keeps the body most fit for work—to do which consistently requires a considerable degree of mortification.

Nevertheless, we may well regret the decay of the old

spirit of hardiness since even a generation ago. The feeling which gave rise to the phrase " grin and bear it " was very excellent, and seems now almost extinct. The modern tendency is all to the magnification of small ailments, to constant remedies, and scientific self-indulgence which people justify to themselves under the name of hygiene. It is no exaggeration to say that the degree to which it is carried is out of keeping with the hardiness of the Christian vocation, and that many persons lose much of the sanctifying effect of their small ills by continually seeking alleviation. The sale of patent medicines is immense, as we can see from the extent to which they are advertised.

It may well be doubted if this spirit does not defeat its own end. The state of mind engendered by continually taking one's temperature, and seeking a cure —probably drinking medicines—whenever it is a degree too high or a degree too low is bad for both mind and body : the *malade imaginaire* often ends by becoming positively ill, and picking up every infection of which he is so much afraid. After all, the best cure for many small ailments is to leave them alone and not bother about them.

In the case of a priest, however, we should put it on a higher ground. He has to be at the service of his people. An indisposition will not dispense him from saying mass on Sunday unless it is sufficiently severe to incapacitate him. Nor will it exempt him from attending a sick call even in rough weather. A soldier would be ashamed of giving in to a small ailment and of injuring his fighting power. He would despise one who did so for his softness. Much more should a priest be above such effeminacy. Often he is so : many a modern priest fights consistently against general weak health, with such success that his weakness is not known or suspected. In such an effort God will give us very

special help. But, alas! one can call to mind also instances of those who systematically nurse their ailments, and seriously injure their constitution by continually taking drugs and applying remedies.

Before we can learn how to consecrate our real illnesses let us learn to despise and fight against small ailments. It is by no means always easy, and there will no doubt be times when one is on the verge of actual breakdown; but so long as we have the real power, we should fight strenuously against them. To lie in bed in the morning, still more to spend a day in bed, should be the last resort, only when imperiously necessary. Once we give way, we shall find reasons increasingly often to induce us to repeat the act. On the other hand, any work we do under the handicap of headache or indigestion or rheumatic pains or other troublesome weakness will, we may be sure, be specially blessed by Almighty God.

Turning now to the time of severe illness, it is easy to say, but it is none the less true, that it may be a great grace; and like other graces, if neglected, it becomes the reverse. We are speaking of course of a grave and serious illness, whether or not there be danger to life. One of the most remarkable phenomena in our strangely complex nature is the sudden and complete way in which our most acute anxieties disappear at the touch of sickness. This at once leaves the ground free for our own thoughts, and if we have been leading a really busy life, we can find many things which we have never had time to think out. Nevertheless, we cannot do much thinking at the beginning, through sheer mental debility, even apart from the pain which often accompanies the illness. The tendency is strong simply to give our thoughts to our illness and its remedies, and the small incidents which surround a sick-bed. Those who have looked forward to reviewing their lives and setting their

consciences in order during their last illness should be warned that experience shows such thoughts to be uncongenial at that time. Notwithstanding the way in which time hangs, especially at night, one is least of all inclined to fill it by serious examination of conscience, or for the matter of that by any form of prayer. Our obligations to Meditation, or the like, or even to reciting the Divine Office, have suddenly ceased, and the danger is that we may take an absolutely material view of our condition, and cease all relations with Almighty God, looking forward only vaguely to resuming them when we are convalescent. A few considerations on illness as a time of grace may be useful at such a season.

In the first place, it has often been pointed out that a time of sickness is the one period of life when we know for certain that we are doing God's will ; for we have no alternative. Nor is it any answer to say that this illness may be the punishment of sin, either by the law of nature or the providence of God. For even if this were so, the sin is over and has passed out of our control ; it can never be recalled. Whatever our past failings, or whatever God's providence in our regard, *hic et nunc* He wills this illness, and we have no power of contravening His will. It therefore follows that we have the opportunity for a supreme act of virtue in accepting it willingly and even thanking God for sending it to us, which is an act which requires little effort, and to one who habitually listens to the voice of God, is of no great difficulty. Nor is it incompatible with hope or prayer for speedy recovery, should it be God's will, provided that we willingly embrace the illness so long as God sends it to us. This simple act of conformity will go far to sanctify the whole illness.

Next, as to the use of our time. This often settles itself, at least in the graver stages of the illness. But

we sometimes allow it to settle itself too easily. Certainly we cannot meditate or say Office, or do spiritual reading. But we can and should do *something*. The rosary, for example, is a prayer which does not need much exertion, and if the five mysteries are too much, we can do one mystery at a time. We can also get others to help us by saying occasional simple prayers which we can follow. And occasional mental ejaculatory prayer is always possible. Of course any such exercise must be only occasional: during a great part of the day we shall not be thinking directly of Almighty God; but as in health our ordinary exercises sanctify the whole day, so in sickness very much shorter ones have a similar far-reaching effect.

Here it may be permitted to put in a strong plea, if a nurse is wanted, to have a Catholic one. Many priests would prefer a nun, even though her medical qualifications were less than those of a professional nurse—which is far from being always the case. If, however, we yield so far as to have a lay woman, at least let her be one of our faith. It is astonishing how frequently even good Catholics impose a non-Catholic nurse on a priest on the plea that nursing has nothing to do with religion. There is really no reason to do so. Plenty of Catholic nurses are to be had. It means some little additional trouble, but that is all. Yet the gain in comfort to the sick man is immense; in the case of a mental illness it is supreme. There are scores of little ways of daily occurrence in which the Catholic nurse may help the devotion of the priest, and minister to his spiritual as well as his bodily wants. There is indeed something unseemly in the question of whether the patient is fit to say mass or not being regulated by a person to whom the mass means nothing, and who cannot possibly estimate the reasons in favour of that consolation being granted. In the meantime, the poor patient is helpless.

He has to accept what others provide for him, and has no power to make his own wish felt, for in such matters an invalid is often treated with strange want of consideration. In many cases the hired nurse thinks little or nothing of the patient's feelings, so long as she keeps the sick room neat from a professional point of view, and so pleases the doctor. "I must not let you get bedsores," a nurse once said, "or what will the doctor say?" The question "What will the patient say?" did not seem to enter her head; yet he was the chief person concerned.

Every serious illness has a crisis—sometimes of considerable duration—which is followed either by a recovery more or less gradual, or by a gradual sinking. Let us follow the former alternative first.

One of the predominant thoughts in time of serious illness is looking back on the days of one's health and strength with a feeling of regret for the poor use we made of them, and a longing to have the same advantage again, if but for a short time, to make some small amends for past shortcomings, or at least to show our goodwill. Canon Keatinge tells a touching story of a dying priest, one of whose arms had been amputated, who assured him that he would willingly part with the other arm also, if only he could have the privilege of saying mass once more.[1] Yet he had spent forty years of his life as a missionary, during which time he had said mass almost every day. A feeling somewhat akin to this is probably within the memory of most priests who have passed through serious illness. The recollection of their past priestly life passes through their mind, and they long to have once again the opportunities which formerly were so plentiful. When real convalescence has set in, they know that God in His mercy has heard their prayer, and they are to have

[1] *The Priest, etc.*, p. 60.

another chance. This thought cannot but fill them with joy.

Yet convalescence is a time which requires in some sense greater patience than the crisis of an illness. It is essential for its completion that work shall not be resumed too soon. In grave illness nature asserts itself irresistibly in this matter, the very suffering and weakness overshadowing some of the tedium and *ennui*. But in the case of convalescence, it devolves on us to put voluntarily restraint on ourselves, and to omit doing many things which singly might not be beyond our actual physical power, but which would retard or even prevent proper recovery. It devolves on us to "kill time" in a manner that in health would be almost sinful. Literature of the lightest is indulged in, and wisely so, and any pastime such as a game of cards comes as a relief, when one longs to be once more up and doing. Day after day—week after week—we have to occupy ourselves as best we can, while our nature slowly recuperates itself. It is real wisdom to wait patiently for the day of our emancipation from the control of doctor and nurse. We may have the consolation of saying mass, if not every day, at least frequently; and the time may come when we may resume our Office, though until we are sure that we are able to say it all, we are not bound to say any. Then perhaps we may be well enough to be taken to the seaside or other health resort to complete the cure, and this forms a little excitement: but soon that dies down, in the heavy atmosphere of doing nothing, and we require all the stimulus we can get for our patience.

At length, however, the day dawns when we go forth, pronounced well enough for work, and we resume that life which we once thought had finally passed from us. Then is the time to gather up the fruits of our illness, and to show by the spirit with which we now approach

our duties that the lesson of illness has not been lost on us. No feeling of high spirits at the events of life such as starting for a holiday or the prospect of enjoyment will compare with the feeling of elation at finding oneself once more leading the life of a priest in the midst of his people.

But not all illness leads to convalescence, and if the malady is taking a serious turn, the priest of all men has a right to be told. He has been so long familiar with death-beds that even the feeling of shock, so often put forward as a plea for concealing an invalid's state, is not to be apprehended in his case ; and he knows as no one else does how to prepare himself to face this last passage. Alas ! very often he has to do it for himself ; he has frequently been the support and consolation of others, but he may live in a lonely mission and find no one to minister to him in his own time of need. He may have to go without Confession or Extreme Unction, and only secure Viaticum by getting a layman to open the Tabernacle, and bring up the Ciborium so that the patient can communicate himself. Or he may live in a populous city and have the same assistance as others. But in either case he has no reason for discouragement. If he has given his whole life to the service of his Divine Master, he need have no fear but that in return he will have the grace of dying as a priest should.

Once a priest always a priest, and there is no time in life when a man's priesthood is more prominent than when he lies on his bed of death, while his parishioners going about their daily duties remember him continually in their prayers. Thus truly they are grouped around him in spirit, as the sheep around their shepherd. " I know mine and mine know Me." He has been intimate with them, has shown how he knows and sympathises with their difficulties and trials and dangers ; now it is their turn to show that they also know him, perhaps

better than he knows himself, which they show by the very certainty they entertain as to his final lot. It may be that the priest himself, knowing his own frailty, is tempted to despondency as he lies so helpless on his bed of suffering. He may be as the man who "revolved these things within himself, saying: 'If I did but know that I should still persevere'; and presently he heard an answer from God; 'And if thou didst know this, what wouldst thou do? Do now what thou wouldst then do, and thou shalt be very secure.' And immediately being comforted and strengthened, he committed himself to the divine will and his anxious wavering ceased."[1] What more can the sick man do, but "commit himself to the divine will"? Then in union with that divine will, surrounded by those praying around him, he goes forth from the world as a priest of God, this being the concluding act of his priestly vocation.

[1] *Imitation*, I, xxv. 2.

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